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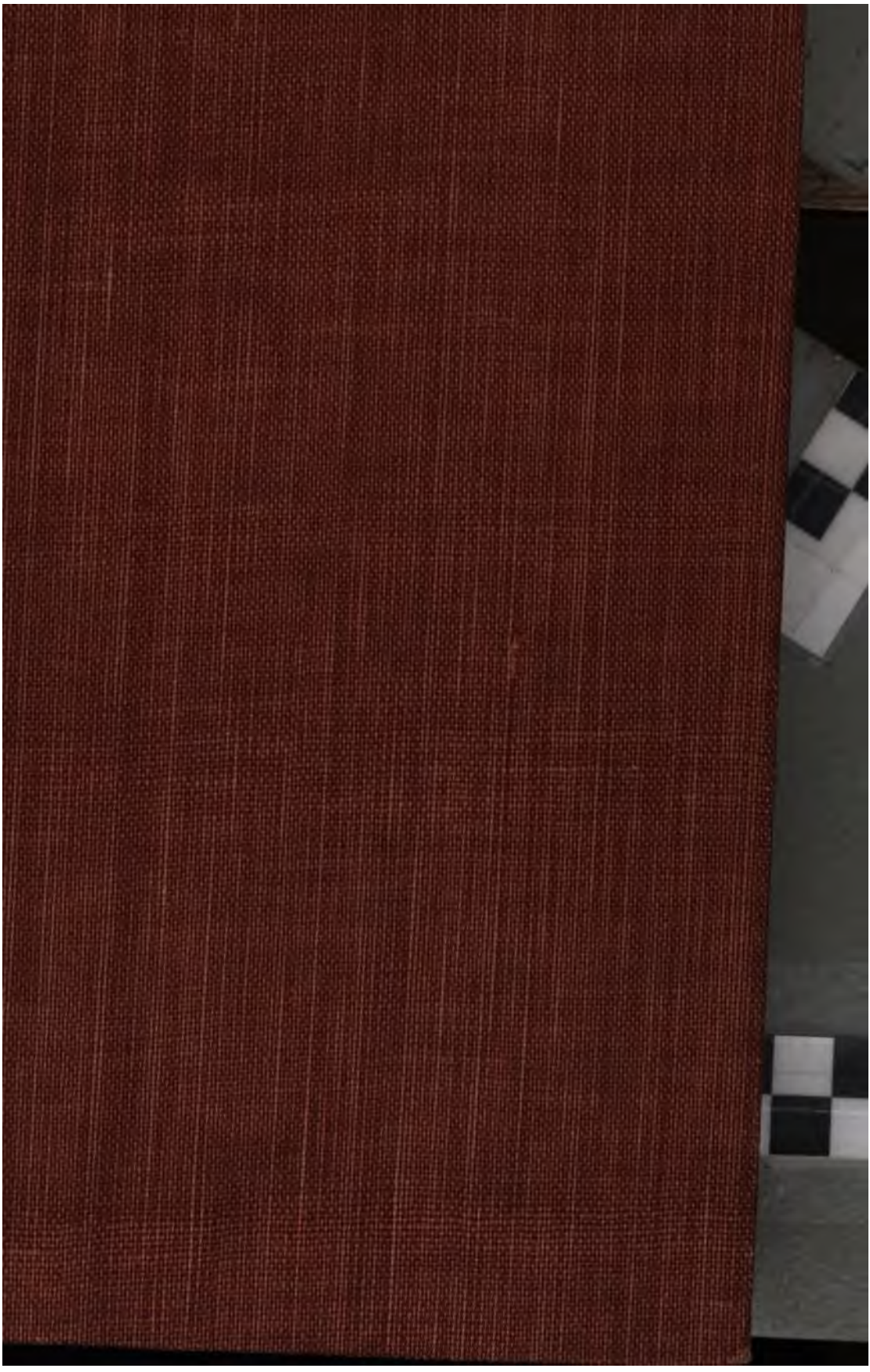

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THE SEVEN CARDINAL SINS

LUXURY

"'*There he is.*'"
Original etching by Adrian Marcus.

Lurury—Gluttony. Two of the Seven Cardinal Sins. *ILLUSTRATED WITH ETCHINGS BY ADRIAN MARCEL.*

BY EUGENE SUE

BOSTON

FRANCIS A. NICCOLLS & CO.

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Luxury and Gluttony.

LUXURY.

CHAPTER I.

THE palace of the Élysée-Bourbon, — the old hôtel of the Marquise de Pompadour, — situated in the middle of the Faubourg St. Honoré, was, previous to the last revolution, furnished, as every one knows, for the occupancy of foreign royal highnesses, — Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Mussulman, from the princes of the German confederation to Ibrahim Pacha.

About the end of the month of July, in a year long past, at eleven o'clock in the morning, several young secretaries and gentlemen belonging to the retinue of his Royal Highness, the Archduke Leopold Maximilian, who had occupied the Élysée for six weeks, met in one of the official parlours of the palace.

"The review on the Field of Mars in honour of his Royal Highness is prolonged," remarked one of the company. "The audience of the prince will be crowded this morning."

"The fact is," replied another, "five or six persons have already been waiting a half-hour, and monseigneur, in his rigorous military punctuality, will regret this enforced delay."

Then one of the doors opened; a young man not more than twenty years old at most, a guest of the house, crossed the parlour, and entered an adjoining

chamber, after having saluted, with mingled kindness and embarrassment, the speakers, who rose upon seeing him, thus testifying a deference which seemed unwarranted by his age and position.

When he had disappeared, one of the gentlemen, alluding to him, said:

"Poor Count Frantz, always so timid! A young girl of fifteen, just out of the convent, would have more assurance! To look at him, who would believe him capable of such rare bravery, and that, too, for three years in the Caucasus war? And that he came so valiantly and brilliantly out of that duel forçed on him in Vienna? I, gentlemen, picture to myself Count Frantz modestly dropping his eyes as he gave the Circassians a thrust of his sword."

"Besides, I believe that his Royal Highness makes a decided convenience of the ingenuousness of his son — "

"The devil! No indiscretion, dear sir!"

"Let me finish, please. I say that monseigneur makes a convenience of the unconquerable ingenuousness of his godson."

"Well and good. And I think with you that the prince does not see this handsome boy exposed to the temptations of wicked Paris, without some anxiety. But what are you smiling at, my dear sir?"

"Nothing."

"Do you think that Count Frantz has had some love affair, in spite of his apparent innocence?"

"You can see after a little, gentlemen, all the fine things a smile may mean, for I call you to witness I am satisfied with smiling."

"Seriously, my dear sir, what do you think of Count Frantz?"

"I think nothing, I say nothing, I shall be as mute as a diplomatist whose interest it is to keep silent, or as a young officer of the noble guards when he passes, for the first time, under the inspection of monseigneur."

"The truth is, the prince has a glance which intimidates the boldest. But to return to Count Frantz."

This conversation was interrupted by a number of persons who entered the official chamber.

The newcomers banished the thought of Count Frantz, and two or three voices asked at once:

"Well, what about your sightseeing? Is this famous manufactory in the Faubourg St. Marceau worth the trouble of a visit?"

"For my part, gentlemen, I am always very curious about the construction of machinery," replied one who had just entered. "The whole morning has been interesting, and I declare M. Charles Dutertre, the proprietor of this factory, one of the most accomplished and intelligent machinists that I know, besides being a most agreeable man; I intend to persuade monseigneur to visit his workshops."

"Well and good, my dear sir; we will not accuse you of wasting your time in frivolities, but I have not such high pretensions, and my pretension is only in a state of hope."

"And what hope?"

"To be invited to dine with the celebrated Doctor Gasterini."

"The most illustrious, the most profound gourmand of Europe."

"They say, really, that his table is an ideal of the paradise of gourmands."

"I do not know, alas! if this paradise will be as open to me as the other, but I hope so."

"I confess my weakness. Of all that I have seen in Paris, what has most charmed me, fascinated me, dazzled me, I will even say instructed —"

"Well, is what?"

"It is — our proud and modest Germany will blush at the blasphemy — it is —"

"Do finish!"

"It is the Mabille ball!"

The laughter and the exclamations provoked by this frank avowal lasted until one of the secretaries of the archduke entered, holding two letters in his hand, and saying, gaily:

"Gentlemen, fresh news from Bologna and Venice!"

"Bravo, my dear Ulrik, what news?"

"The most curious, the most extraordinary in the world!"

"Really?"

"Quick, tell us, dear Ulrik."

"In the first place, Bologna, and Venice afterward, have been for several days in a state of incredible agitation, for reason of a series of events not less incredible."

"A revolution?"

"A movement of young Italy?"

"Perhaps a new mandate from the papal defender?"

"No, gentleman, it concerns a woman."

"A woman?"

"Yes, if it is not the devil, which I am inclined to believe."

"Ulrik, you are putting us to entreaty, do explain."

"Do you remember, gentlemen, last year, having heard in Germany that young Mexican widow, the Marquise de Miranda, spoken of?"

"Zounds! the one whom our poet, Moser-Hartmann, wrote of in such magnificent and passionate verse, under the name of the modern Aphrodite."

"Ah, ah, ah, what a charming mistake!" said one of the inquirers, roaring with laughter. "Moser-Hartmann, the religious and soulful poet, the chaste poet, pure and cold as the immaculate snow, sings Aphrodite, in burning verses. I have heard those admirable verses repeated, but, evidently, they are the production of another Hartmann."

"And I assure you, my dear sir, and Ulrik will confirm it, that this poem, which they say rightfully ranks

with the most beautiful odes of Sappho, is truly the work of Moser-Hartmann."

"Nothing more true," replied Ulrik. "I heard Moser-Hartmann recite the verses himself, — they are worthy of antiquity."

"Then I believe you, but how do you explain this sudden incomprehensible transformation?"

"Ah, my God! This transformation which has changed a cold, correct man, but a man of estimable talent, indeed, a man of genius, full of fire and power, whose name is renowned through Europe — this transformation has been wrought by the woman whom the poet has praised, by the Marquise de Miranda."

"Moser-Hartmann so changed? I would have thought the thing impossible!"

"Bah!" replied Ulrik, "the marquise has done several things, and here is one of her best tricks, written to me from Bologna. There was there a cardinal legate of the Pope, the terror and aversion of the country."

"His name is Orsini, a man as detestable as he is detested."

"And his exterior reveals his nature. I saw him in Lombardy. What a cadaverous, sinister face! He always seemed to me the very type of an inquisitor."

"Well, the marquise took him to a ball at the Casino in Bologna, disguised as a Hungarian hussar!"

"The cardinal legate as a Hungarian hussar!" cried the company, in one voice.

"Come, Ulrik, you are telling an idle tale."

"You can read this letter, and when you see who signs it you will doubt no longer, skeptical as you are," replied Ulrik. "Yes, the marquise made Orsini accompany her so disguised; then, in the midst of the dance, she tore his mask from his face and said, in a loud voice: 'Good evening, Cardinal Orsini,' and, laughing like a crazy woman, she disappeared, leaving the legate exposed to the hoots and hisses of the exasperated crowd. He

would have run some danger if his escort had not protected him. The next day Bologna was in a stir, demanding the dismissal of Orsini, who, after two days of excitement, was forced to leave the city by night. In the evening every house was illuminated for joy, and my correspondent says the monogram of the marquise was seen on many transparencies."

"And what became of her?"

"She was not seen again, she left for Venice," replied Ulrik, showing a second letter, "and there, they write me, another thing has happened."

"What a woman! What a woman!"

"What sort of a woman is she?"

"Have you seen her?"

"No."

"Nor I."

"Nor I."

"They say she is very tall and very slender."

"They told me she was above the ordinary height."

"One thing is sure, she is a brunette, because Moser-Hartmann praises her black eyes and black eyebrows."

"All I can say is," replied Ulrik, "that in this letter from Venice, which place the marquise has recently left for France, as I am informed, she is poetically called the 'blonde star,' so I think she must be a blonde."

"But what has she done in Venice? What has happened there?"

"My faith!" exclaimed Ulrik, "it is an adventure which smacks of the manners of pagan antiquity and the middle ages of Italy at the same time."

Unfortunately for the curiosity of Ulrik's auditors, the sudden beating of a drum outside announced the return of the Archduke Leopold, and each person in the house of the prince at once went to his post, ready to receive the Royal Highness.

In fact, the sentinel of the Élysée, descrying the approach of several carriages in the livery of the King of

the French, had called "To arms!" The soldiers on guard with their commanding officer were immediately in line, and at the moment the carriages entered successively the immense court of the Élysée, the drums beat and the troops presented arms.

The first of the carriages stopped before the palace; the footmen in bright red livery opened the door, and his Royal Highness, the Archduke Maximilian Leopold, slowly ascended the steps, conversing with a colonel, officer of ordinance, whose office it was to accompany him; a few steps behind the prince came his aids-de-camp, dressed in brilliant foreign uniforms, and took their places in order at the foot of the steps by the royal carriages. The archduke, thirty-nine years old, was robust, yet slenderly proportioned. He wore with military severity the full-dress uniform of the field-marshal, white coat, with epaulettes of gold; scarlet casimir breeches over which reached the shining black of his high riding-boots, a little dusty, as he had assisted in the review appointed in his honour. The great cordon red, the collar of the fleece of gold, and five or six medallions of different orders ornamented his breast; his hair was pale blond, as was his long moustache turned up in military style, which gave a still more severe expression to his features, and strongly augmented the breadth of his chin and the prominent angle of his nose; his eye, cold and penetrating, half-covered by the eyelid, was set under a very heavy eyebrow, which gave him the air of always looking very high. This severe and disdainful glance, united to an imperious manner and an inflexible carriage of the head, gave to the whole personal bearing of the archduke a remarkable character of arrogant, icy authority.

About a quarter of an hour after the prince had returned to the Élysée, the carriage of a French minister, and that of an ambassador from a great power in the North, stopped successively before the entrance,

and the statesman and the diplomatist entered the palace.

Almost at the same moment, one of the principal persons of this story arrived on foot in the court of the Elysée-Bourbon.

M. Pascal, for such was our hero's name, appeared to be about thirty-six years old. He was of middle stature, very dark, and wore quite a long beard, as rough and black as his eyebrows, beneath which glittered two little very piercing gray eyes. As he had the habit of holding his head down, and his two hands in the pockets of his trousers, the attitude served to increase the roundness of his broad shoulders. His features were especially remarkable for their expression of sarcastic sternness, to which was joined that air of inexorable assurance peculiar to people who are convinced of their power and are vain of it. A narrow black cravat, tied, as they say, à la Colin, a long waistcoat of Scotch cloth, a light great-coat, whitish in colour, a gray hat well worn, and wide nankin trousers, in the pockets of which M. Pascal kept his hands, made up his costume of doubtful cleanliness, and perfectly in harmony with the extreme heat of the season and the habitual carelessness of the wearer.

When M. Pascal passed before the porter's lodge, he was challenged by that functionary, who from the depth of his armchair called:

"Eh! — speak, sir, where are you going?"

Either M. Pascal did not hear the porter, or he did not wish to give himself the trouble to reply, as he continued to walk toward the entrance of the palace without saying a word.

The porter, forced to rise from his armchair, ran after the mute visitor, and said, impatiently:

"I ask again, sir, where are you going? You can reply, can you not?"

M. Pascal stopped, took a disdainful survey of his

interlocutor, shrugged his shoulders, and said, as he turned again toward the entrance: "I am going — to see the archduke."

The porter knew the class with which he was accustomed to deal. He could not imagine that this visitor, in a summer greatcoat and loose cravat, really had an audience with the prince, or would dare to present himself before his Highness in a costume so impertinently outside of the regulation, for all persons who had the honour of being received at the palace were usually attired in black; so taking M. Pascal for some half-witted or badly informed tradesman, he followed him, calling in a loud voice:

"But sir, tradespeople who come to see his Highness do not pass by the grand staircase. Down there at the right you will see the door for tradesmen and servants by which you ought to enter."

M. Pascal did not care to talk; he shrugged his shoulders again, and continued his march toward the staircase without a word.

The porter, exasperated by this silence and this obstinacy, seized M. Pascal by the arm, and, speaking louder still, said:

"Must I tell you again, sir, that you cannot pass that way?"

"What do you mean, scoundrel?" cried M. Pascal, in a tone of contempt and anger, as if this outrage on the part of the porter was as insolent as inconceivable, "do you know to whom you are talking?"

There was in these words an expression of authority so threatening, that the poor porter, frightened for a moment, stammered:

"Monsieur, — I — do — not — know."

The great door of the vestibule was suddenly opened. One of the aids-de-camp of the prince, having seen from the parlour window the altercation between the visitor and the porter, hastily descended the staircase, and,

eagerly approaching M. Pascal, said to him in excellent French, with a sympathetic tone:

"Ah, monsieur, his Royal Highness will, I am sure, be much grieved by this misunderstanding. Do me the honour to follow me; I will introduce you at once. I have just received orders from monseigneur concerning you, sir."

M. Pascal bowed his head in assent, and followed the aid-de-camp, leaving the porter amazed and afflicted by his own want of address.

When M. Pascal and his guide arrived in the chamber of waiting, where other officials were congregated, the young officer said:

"The audience of his Royal Highness is crowded this morning, because the review detained monseigneur much longer than he expected, so, desiring to make you wait as short a time as possible, he has ordered me to conduct you, upon your arrival, into a chamber adjoining his private office, where his Royal Highness will meet you as soon as his conference with the minister of foreign affairs is ended."

M. Pascal again made sign of assent, and, following the aid-de-camp, crossed a dark passage, and entered a chamber overlooking the magnificent garden of the Élysée-Bourbon.

Before withdrawing, the aid-de-camp, not a little annoyed by the unfortunate altercation between the porter and M. Pascal, remarked the negligent attire of the latter. Habituated to the severe formalities of etiquette, the young courtier was shocked at the unconventional dress of the person he was about to introduce, and hesitated between the fear of antagonising a man like Pascal and the desire to protest against the unsuitability of his bearing as an insult to the dignity of a prince, who was known to be inexorable in all that pertained to the respect due his rank; but the first fear prevailed, and as it was too late to insist upon a change

of dress consistent with the requirements of court etiquette, the young courtier said:

"As soon as the foreign minister withdraws from the presence of his Royal Highness, I will inform him, sir, that you are at his orders."

These last words, "that you are at his orders," did not appear to sound very well in the ears of M. Pascal. A sardonic smile played upon his lips, but making himself at home, so to speak, and finding the temperature of the room too warm, he opened one of the windows, placed his elbows on the balustrade, and, keeping his hat on his head, occupied himself with a survey of the garden.

CHAPTER II.

EVERYBODY knows the garden of the Élysée, that charming little park, planted with the most beautiful trees in the world, whose fresh green turf is watered by a clear winding river; a terraced walk, shaded by elms a century old, borders this park on the side of the avenue called Marigny; a similar walk, parallel to it, bounds it on the opposite side, and a very low wall separates it from the neighbouring gardens. This last mentioned walk ended a short distance from the window where M. Pascal was so comfortably seated, and soon his attention was keenly awakened by several incidents.

The young man who had passed through the parlour, occupied by secretaries and gentlemen, and who had, for reason of his timidity, been the subject of several remarks, was slowly promenading the shaded walk. He was of slender and graceful stature. Every few moments he stopped, stooped down, and remained immovable a second, then continued his promenade. When he reached the extremity of the walk, he approached, almost by stealth, the wall bordering upon the adjacent garden, and, as at this point the wall was hardly more than four feet high, he leaned upon it, apparently absorbed in reflection or the expectation of meeting another person.

So long as the promenader kept his back turned to M. Pascal, who now began to feel very curious concerning him, his features of course could not be distinguished; but when he turned, after having made some

desired discovery, and retraced his steps, he was face to face with his observer at the window.

Count Frantz de Neuberg, as we have said, passed for the godson of the archduke, by whom he was tenderly loved. According to the rumours of the court, his Royal Highness, having had no children since his marriage with the Princess of Saxe-Teschen, had abundant reason for exercising paternal interest in Frantz de Neuberg, the secret fruit of a first love.

Frantz, scarcely twenty years old at the time of this history, presented the perfect type of the melancholy beauty of the North. His long blond hair, parted in the middle of a brow as white and ingenuous as that of a young girl, framed a face whose regularity was without a flaw. His large blue eyes, soft and dreaming, seemed to reflect the purity of his soul, and an incipient beard, shading his chin and upper lip with a silken, golden down, accentuated the virility of his charming face.

As he came up the walk, Frantz more and more attracted the attention of M. Pascal, who looked at him with a sort of admiring surprise, for it would have been difficult not to observe the rare perfection of the young man's features; but when at a short distance from the window he encountered the fixed and persistent gaze of M. Pascal, he appeared not less provoked than embarrassed, blushed, looked downward, and, turning on his heel, abruptly, quickened his pace until he reached the middle of the walk, where he began again his slow promenade, evidently constrained by the thought that a stranger was watching his movements. He hardly dared approach the boundary of the neighbouring garden, but suddenly, forgetting all preoccupation, he ran toward the wall at the sight of a little straw hat which appeared on the other side, and encased in its frame lined with rose-coloured silk was the freshest, most entrancing countenance of fifteen years that ever entered into a young man's dream.

"Mlle. Antonine," said Frantz quickly, in a low voice, "some one is looking at us."

"This evening," murmured a sweet voice, in reply.

And the little straw hat disappeared as by enchantment, as the young girl jumped from a bench she had mounted on the other side of the wall. But as compensation, no doubt, for this abrupt retreat, a beautiful rose fell at the feet of Frantz, who picked it up and passionately pressed it to his lips, then, hiding the flower in his waistcoat, the young man disappeared in a thicket instead of continuing his promenade in the long walk. Notwithstanding the rapidity with which these incidents transpired, and the instantaneous disappearance of the little straw hat, M. Pascal had seen distinctly the exquisite loveliness of the young girl's face, and Frantz also, as he kissed the rose which fell at his feet.

The hard and saturnine features of M. Pascal took on a strange and gloomy expression, where one could read violent anger mingled with jealousy, pain, and hatred. For some moments, his physiognomy, almost terrifying in its malevolence, betrayed the man, who, accustomed to see all bend before him, is capable of sentiments and actions of diabolical wickedness when an unforeseen obstacle contradicts his iron will.

"She! she! here in this garden near the Elysée!" exclaimed he, with concentrated rage. "What is she doing there? Triple fool that I am! she comes here to coquet with this puny, blond youth. Perhaps she lives in the next hôtel. Misery! misery! to find out the place where she dwells after having done everything in vain to discover it since this damned pretty face of fifteen struck my eyes, and made me a fool, — I, who believed myself dead to these sudden and frantic caprices, compared to which what are called violent passions of the heart are ice. I have met this little girl three times, and feel myself, as in my young days, capable of anything in order to possess her. How jealousy

irritates and devours me this moment! Misery! it is stupid, it is silly, but oh, how I suffer!"

As he uttered these words, M. Pascal's face expressed malicious and ferocious grief; then shaking his fist at the side of the wall where the little straw hat had disappeared, he muttered, in a voice of concentrated rage:

"You shall pay for it. Go, little girl, and whatever it may cost me, you shall belong to me."

And sitting with his elbows on the balustrade, unable to detach his angry glances from the spot where he had seen Frantz speak to the young girl, M. Pascal presented a picture of fury and despair, when one of the doors of the parlour softly opened, and the archduke entered.

The prince, evidently, felt so sure that he would meet his expected visitor face to face, that, beforehand, instead of his usual cold arrogance, he had assumed a most agreeable expression, entering the room with a smile upon his lips.

But M. Pascal, leaning half way out of the window, had not heard the door open, and, never suspecting the presence of the prince, he remained seated, his back to the Royal Highness, and his elbows on the sill of the window.

A physiognomist witnessing this silent scene would have found in it a curious study of the reaction of feeling in the countenance of the prince.

At the sight of M. Pascal leaning out of the window, wearing a summer greatcoat, and violating all propriety by keeping his hat on his head, the archduke stopped short; his assumed smile vanished from his lips, and, taking a prouder attitude than ordinary, he stiffened himself in his handsome uniform, turned purple with anger, knit his eyebrows, while his eyes flashed with indignation. But soon reflection, doubtless, appeasing this inner storm, the features of the prince took on an expression of resignation as bitter as it was sad, and he

bowed his head, as if he submitted to a fatal necessity.

Stifling a sigh of offended pride as he threw a glance of vindictive contempt on Pascal at the window, the prince again assumed, as we have said, his smile of affability, and walked toward the casement, coughing loud enough to announce his presence, and spare himself the last humiliation of touching the shoulder of our familiar visitor in order to attract his attention.

At the sonorous "hum-hum!" of his Royal Highness, M. Pascal turned around suddenly. The gloomy expression of his face was succeeded by a sort of cruel and malicious satisfaction, as if the occasion had furnished a victim upon whom he could vent his suppressed wrath.

M. Pascal approached the prince, saluted him in a free and easy manner, and holding his hat in one hand, while the other was plunged deep in his pocket, he said:

"A thousand pardons, monseigneur, really I did not know you were there."

"I am persuaded of that, M. Pascal," replied the prince, with ill-disguised haughtiness.

Then he added:

"Please follow me into my study, sir. I have some official news to communicate to you."

And he walked toward his study, when M. Pascal, with apparent calmness, for this man had a wonderful control over himself when it was necessary, said:

"Monseigneur, will you permit me one question?"

"Speak, sir," replied the prince, stopping and turning to his visitor, with surprise.

"Monseigneur, who is that young man of twenty at the most, with long blond hair, who promenades in the walk which can be seen from this window? Who is he, monseigneur?"

"You mean, no doubt, monsieur, my godson, Count Frantz de Neuberg."

"Ah, this young man is your godson, monseigneur?

I congratulate you sincerely, — one could not see a prettier boy."

"Is he not?" replied the prince, sensible of this praise, even in the mouth of Pascal. "Has he not a charming face?"

"That is what I have just been observing at my leisure, monseigneur."

"And Count Frantz has not only a charming face," added the prince; "he has fine qualities of heart and great bravery."

. "I am enchanted, monseigneur, to know that you have such an accomplished godson. Has he been in Paris long?"

"He arrived with me."

"And he will depart with you, monseigneur, for it must be painful for you to be separated from this amiable young man?"

"Yes, monsieur, I hope to take Count Frantz with me back to Germany."

"A thousand pardons, monseigneur, for my indiscreet curiosity, but your godson is one of those persons in whom one is interested in spite of himself. Now, I am at your service."

"Then follow me, if you please, monsieur."

Pascal nodded his head in assent, and, walking side by side with the archduke, he reached the door of the study with him, then, stopping with a gesture of deference, which was only another impertinence, he bowed slightly, and said to the prince, as if his Highness had hesitated to enter first:

"After you, monseigneur, after you."

The prince understood the insolence, but swallowed it, and entered his study, making a sign to Pascal to follow him.

The latter, although unaccustomed to the ceremonial of the court, had too much penetration not to comprehend the import of his acts and words. He had not

only the consciousness of his insolence, instigated by his recent and suppressed resentment, but this insolence he had actually studied and calculated, and even in his interview had considered the question of addressing his Royal Highness as monsieur, simply; but, by a refinement of intelligent impertinence, he thought the ceremonious appellation of monseigneur would render his familiarities still more disagreeable to the dignity and good breeding of the prince.

Let us turn back to an analysis of the character of Pascal, — a character less eccentric, perhaps, than it appears at first to be. Let us say, simply, that for ten years of his life this man, born in a humble and precarious position, had as a day-labourer and drudge submitted to the most painful humiliations, the most insolent domination, and the most outrageous contempt. Thus, bitter and implacable hatreds were massed together in his soul, and the day when, in his turn, he became powerful, he abandoned himself without scruple and without remorse to the fierce joy of reprisal, and it gave him little concern if his revenge fell upon an innocent head.

The archduke, instead of a superior mind, possessed a long, practical acquaintance with men, acquired in the exercise of supreme authority in the military hierarchy of his country; besides, in his second interview with M. Pascal, — at which interview we have assisted, — he had understood the significance of the studied insolence of this person, and when, as he entered his study with him, he saw him, without invitation, seat himself familiarly in the armchair just occupied by a prime minister, whom he found full of courtesy and deference, the prince felt a new and cruel oppression of the heart.

The penetrating glance of Pascal surprised the expression of this feeling on the face of the archduke, and he said to himself, with triumphant disdain: "Here is a prince born on the steps of a throne, a cousin, at least,

of all the kings of Europe, a generalissimo of an army of a hundred thousand soldiers, here he is in all the glory of his battle uniform, adorned with all the insignia of honour and war. This highness, this man, despises me in his pride of a sovereign race. He hates me because he has need of me, and knows well that he must humiliate himself; nevertheless, this man, in spite of his contempt, in spite of his hatred, I hold in my power, and I intend to make him feel it keenly, for to-day my heart is steeped in gall."

CHAPTER III.

M. PASCAL, having seated himself in the gilded armchair on the side of the table opposite the prince, first seized a mother-of-pearl paper-cutter that he found under his hand, and, whirling it incessantly, said:

"Monseigneur, if it is agreeable to you, let us talk of business, for at a certain hour I must be in the Faubourg St. Marceau, at the house of a manufacturer, who is one of my friends."

"I wish to inform you, monsieur," replied the prince, restraining himself with difficulty, "that I have already postponed until to-morrow other audiences that should have taken place to-day, that I might devote all my time to you."

"That is very kind of you, monseigneur, but let us come to the point."

The prince took up from the table a long sheet of official paper, and, handing it to M. Pascal, said to him:

"This note will prove to you, monsieur, that all the parties interested in the transfer that is proposed to me not only authorise me formally to accept it, but willingly offer their pledges, and even protect all the accidents of my acceptance."

M. Pascal, without moving from his armchair, extended his hand from one side of the table to the other, to receive the note, and, taking it, said:

"There was absolutely nothing to be done without this security."

And he began to read slowly, nibbling the while

the mother-of-pearl knife, which he did not surrender for a moment.

The prince fixed an anxious, penetrating glance on Pascal, trying to divine, from the expression of his face, if his visitor had confidence in the security offered.

At the end of a few moments, M. Pascal discontinued his reading, saying between his teeth, with an offended air, as if he were talking to himself:

"Ho! ho! This Article 7 does not suit me at all, — not at all!"

"Explain yourself, monsieur," said the prince, seriously annoyed.

"However," continued M. Pascal, taking up his reading again, without replying to the archduke, and pretending to be talking to himself, "this Article 7 is corrected by Article 8, — yes, — and, in fact, it is quite good, — it is very good."

The countenance of the prince seemed to brighten, for, earnestly occupied with the powerful interests of which M. Pascal had necessarily become the umpire, he forgot the impertinence and calculated wickedness of this man, who found a savage delight in making his victim pass through all the perplexities of fear and hope.

At the end of a few moments, each one of which brought new anxiety to the prince, M. Pascal exclaimed:

"Impossible, that! impossible! For me everything would be annulled by this first supplementary article. It is a mockery!"

"Monsieur," cried the prince, "speak more clearly!"

"Pardon me, monseigneur, at that moment I was reading to myself. Well and good, if you wish, I will read for both of us."

The archduke bowed his head, turned red with suppressed indignation, appeared discouraged, and leaned his head on his hand.

M. Pascal, continuing his perusal of the paper, threw

a glance by stealth at the prince, and replied after a few moments, in a more satisfied tone:

"This is a sure, incontestable security."

Then, as the prince seemed to regain hope, he added:

"Unfortunately, this security is apart from —"

He did not finish, but continued his reading in silence.

Never a solicitor in distress imploring a haughty and unfeeling protector, never a despairing borrower humbly addressing a dishonest and whimsical usurer, never accused seeking to read his pardon or condemnation in the countenance of his judge, experienced the torture felt by the prince while M. Pascal was reading the note which he had examined and which he now laid on the table.

"Well, monsieur," said the prince, swallowing his impatience, "what do you decide?"

"Monseigneur, will you have the kindness to lend me a pen and some paper?"

The prince pushed an inkstand, a pen, and some paper before M. Pascal, who began a long series of figures, sometimes lifting his eyes to the ceiling, as if to make a calculation in his head, sometimes muttering incomplete sentences, such as —

"No — I am mistaken because — but I was about to forget — it is evident — the balance will be equal if —"

After long expectation on the part of the prince, M. Pascal threw the pen down on the table, plunged both hands in the pockets of his trousers, threw his head back, and shut his eyes, as if making a last mental calculation, then, holding his head up, said in a short, peremptory voice:

"Impossible, monseigneur."

"What, monsieur!" cried the prince, dismayed. "You assured me in our first interview that the operation was practicable."

"Practicable, monseigneur, but not accomplished."

"But this note, monsieur, this note, joined to the securities I have offered you?"

"This note completes, I know, the securities indispensable to such an operation."

"Then, monsieur, how do you account for your refusal?"

"For particular reasons, monseigneur."

"But, I ask again, do I not offer all the security desirable?"

"Yes, monseigneur, I will say that I regard the operation not only feasible, but sure and advantageous to one who is willing to undertake it; so, I do not doubt, monseigneur, you can find —"

"Eh! monsieur," interrupted the prince, "you know that in the present financial crisis, and for other reasons which you understand as well as I, that you are the only person who can undertake this business."

"The preference of your Royal Highness honours and flatters me infinitely," said Pascal, with an accent of ironical recognition, "so I doubly regret my inability to meet it."

The prince perceived the sarcasm, and replied, feigning offence at the want of appreciation his kindness had met:

"You are unjust, monsieur. The proof that I adhered to my agreement with you in this affair is that I have refused to entertain the proposition of the house Durand."

"I am almost certain that it is a lie," thought M. Pascal, "but no matter, I will get information about the thing; besides, this house sometimes disturbs and cramps me. Fortunately, thanks to that knave, Marcelange, I have an excellent means of protecting myself from that inconvenience in the future."

"Another proof that I adhered directly to my personal agreement with you, M. Pascal," continued the prince, in a deferential tone, "is that I have desired no agent to come between us, certain that we would understand each other as the matter should be understood. Yes," added

the archduke, with a still more insinuating tone, "I hoped that this just homage rendered to your financial intelligence, so universally recognised —"

"Ah, monseigneur."

"To your character as honourable as it is honoured —"

"Monseigneur, really, you overwhelm me."

"I hoped, I repeat, my dear M. Pascal, that in coming frankly to you to propose — what? — an operation whose solidity and advantage you recognise, you would appreciate my attitude, since it appeals to the financier as much as to the private citizen. In short, I hoped to assure you, not only by pecuniary advantage, but by especial testimony, of my esteem and gratitude."

"Monseigneur —"

"I repeat it, my dear M. Pascal, of my gratitude, since, in making a successful speculation, you would render me an immense service, for you cannot know what the results of this loan I solicit from you would be to my dearest family interests."

"Monseigneur, I am ignorant of —"

"And when I speak to you of family interests," said the prince, interrupting M. Pascal, whom he hoped to bring back to his views, "when I speak of family interests, it is not enough; an important question of state also attaches to the transfer of the duchy that is offered me, and which I can acquire only through your powerful financial aid. So, in rendering me a personal service, you would be greatly useful to my nation, and you know, my dear M. Pascal, how great empires requite services done to the state."

"Excuse my ignorance, monseigneur, but I am altogether ignorant of the whole thing."

The prince smiled, remained silent a moment, and replied, with an accent he believed irresistible:

"My dear M. Pascal, are you acquainted with the celebrated banker, Tortolia?"

"I know him by name, monseigneur."

"Do you know that he is a prince of the Holy Empire?"

"Prince of the Holy Empire, monseigneur!" replied Pascal, with amazement.

"I have my man," thought the prince, and he replied aloud: "Do you know that the banker, Tortolia, is a great dignitary in one of the most coveted orders?"

"It would be possible, monseigneur."

"It is not only possible, but it is an actual fact, my dear M. Pascal. Now, I do not see why what has been done for M. Tortolia cannot be done for you."

"Could that be, monseigneur?"

"I say," repeated the prince, with emphasis, "I say I do not see why an illustrious title and high dignities should not recompense you also."

"Me, monseigneur?"

"You."

"Me, monseigneur, I become Prince Pascal?"

"Why not?"

"Come, come, monseigneur is laughing at his poor servant."

"No one has ever doubted my promise, monsieur, and it is almost an offence to me to believe me capable of laughing at you."

"Then, monseigneur, I would laugh at myself, very heartily and very long, if I were stupid enough to desire to pose as a prince, or duke, or marquis, in Europe's carnival of nobility! You see, monseigneur, I am only a poor devil of a plebeian, — my father was a peddler, and I have been a day-labourer. I have laid up a few cents, in attending to my small affairs. I have only my common sense, but this good common sense, monseigneur, will always prevent my decking myself out as the Marquis de la Janotière — that is a very pretty story by Voltaire, you ought to read it, monseigneur! — or making myself the laughing-stock of those malicious people

who amuse themselves by creating marquises and princes out of poor folk."

The archduke was far from expecting this refusal and this bitter retort; however, he put a good face on it, and replied, significantly:

"M. Pascal, I admire this rough sincerity; I admire this disinterestedness. Thank God, there are other means of proving to you my gratitude, and, one day, my friendship."

"Your friendship, monseigneur?"

"It is because I know its worth," added the prince, with imposing dignity, "that I assure you of my friendship, if —"

"Your friendship for me, monseigneur," replied Pascal, interrupting the prince, "your friendship for me, who have, as the wicked ones say, increased my little possessions a hundredfold by dangerous methods, although I have come out of these calumniating accusations as white as a young dove?"

"It is because you have, as you say, monsieur, come out of these odious calumnies, by which all who elevate themselves by labour and merit are pursued, that I would assure you of my affectionate gratitude, if you render me the important service I expect of you."

"Monseigneur, I could not be more impressed or more flattered by your kindness, but unfortunately business is business," said M. Pascal, "and this affair you air does not suit me at all. I need not say how much it costs me to renounce the friendship of which your Royal Highness has desired to assure me."

At this response, bitter and humiliating in its insulting irony, the prince was on the point of flying into a passion, but, reflecting upon the shame and futility of such a transport of rage, he controlled himself, and, desiring to attempt a final effort, he said, in an aggrieved tone:

"So, M. Pascal, it will be said that I prayed, supplicated, and implored you in vain."

These words, "prayed, supplicated, implored," uttered in a tone of sincere distress, appeared in the eyes of the prince to make an impression on M. Pascal, and, in fact, did make a decided impression, inasmuch as, up to that moment, the archduke had not entirely abased himself, but seeing this royal person, after such obstinate refusal, willing to descend to further supplication, M. Pascal experienced an intensity of happiness that he had never known before.

The prince, observing his silence, believed his purpose was shaken, and added, readily:

"Come, my dear M. Pascal, I cannot appeal to your generous heart in vain."

"Really, monseigneur," replied the bloodthirsty villain, who, knowing the speculation to be a good one, was at heart disposed to undertake it, but wanted to realise pleasure as well as profit from it, "you have such a way of putting things. Business, I repeat, ought to be business only, but see now, in spite of myself, I yield like a child to sentiment I am so weak —"

"You consent?" interrupted the prince, radiant with joy, and he seized both hands of the financier in his own. "You consent, my worthy and kind M. Pascal?"

"How can I resist you, monseigneur?"

"At last!" cried the archduke, drawing a long breath of profound satisfaction, as if he had just escaped a frightful danger. "At last!"

"But, monseigneur," replied Pascal, "I must make one little condition."

"Oh, I shall not stand on that, whatever it may be. I subscribe to it beforehand."

"You pledge yourself to more, perhaps, than you think, monseigneur."

"What do you mean?" asked the prince, somewhat disquieted. "What condition do you speak of?"

"In three days, monseigneur, to the hour, I will inform you."

"What!" exclaimed the prince, astonished and crest-fallen; "more delays. Do you not give me your positive promise?"

"In three days, monseigneur, I will give it to you, provided you accept my condition."

"But, pray, tell me this condition now."

"Impossible, monseigneur."

"My dear M. Pascal —"

"Monseigneur," replied Pascal, with ironical gravity, "it is not my habit to be weak twice in succession during one interview. It is now the hour for my appointment in the Faubourg St. Marceau; I have the honour of presenting my respectful compliments to your Royal Highness."

M. Pascal, leaving the prince full of vexation and concern, walked to the door, then turned, and said:

"To-day is Monday; on Thursday, at eleven o'clock, I shall have the honour of seeing your Royal Highness again, and will then submit my little condition."

"Very well, monsieur; on Thursday."

M. Pascal bowed profoundly, and went out.

When he passed through the parlour where the officials were assembled all rose respectfully, recognising the importance of the person whom the prince had just received. M. Pascal returned their courtesy with a patronising inclination of the head, and left the palace as he had entered it, both hands in his pockets, not denying himself the pleasure — for this man lost nothing — of stopping a minute before the lodge of the porter and saying to him:

"Well, scoundrel, will you recognise me another time?"

"Oh, I shall recognise monsieur hereafter! I beg monsieur to pardon my mistake."

"He begs me," said Pascal, half aloud, with a bitter smile. "They know how to beg from the Royal Highness to the porter."

LUXURY.

M. Pascal, as he went out of the Élysée, fell again into painful reflections upon the subject of the young girl whose secret meeting with Count Frantz de Neuberg he had surprised. Wishing to know if she lived in the house contiguous to the palace, he was going to make inquiries, when, remembering that such a course might perhaps compromise his plans, he prudently resolved to wait until evening.

Seeing a hackney coach, he called the driver, entered the carriage, and said to him:

"Faubourg St. Marceau, fifteen; the large factory whose chimney you see from the street."

"The factory belonging to M. Dutertre? I know, citizen, I know; everybody knows that."

The coachman drove down the street.

CHAPTER IV.

M. PASCAL, as we have said, had spent a part of his life in a subordinate and precarious position, enduring the most ignominious treatment with a patience full of bitterness and hatred.

Born of a peddler who had amassed a competency by dint of privation and illicit or questionable traffic, he had commenced his business career as a day-labourer in the house of a provincial usurer, to whom Pascal's father had entrusted the care of his money.

The first years of our hero were passed in a state of servitude as hard as it was humiliating. Nevertheless, as he was endowed with considerable intelligence and unusual ingenuity, and as his despotic will could, upon necessity, hide itself under an exterior of insinuating meanness, — a dissimulation which was the result of his condition, — Pascal, without the knowledge of his master, learned to read, write, and draw up accounts, the faculty for financial calculation developing in him spontaneously with marvellous rapidity. Foreseeing the value of these acquirements, he resolved to conceal them, using them only for his own advantage, and as a dangerous weapon against his master, whom he detested. After mature reflection, Pascal finally thought it his interest to reveal the knowledge he had secretly acquired. The usurer, struck with the ability of the man who was his drudge, then took him as his bookkeeper at a reduced salary, increased his meagre pay by the smallest possible amount, continued to treat him with brutal contempt,

vilifying him more than ever that he might not suspect the use that he made of his new services.

Pascal, earnest, indefatigable in work, and eager to further his financial education, continued to submit passively to the outrages heaped upon him, redoubling his servility in proportion as his master redoubled disdain and cruelty.

At the end of a few years thus passed, he felt sufficiently strong to leave the province, and seek a field more worthy of his ability. He entered into a business correspondence with a banker in Paris, to whom he offered his services. The banker had long appreciated Pascal's work, accepted his proposition, and the bookkeeper left the little town, to the great regret of his former master, who tried too late to retain him in his own interests.

The new patron of our hero was at the head of one of those rich houses, morally questionable, but — and it is not unusual — regarded, in a commercial sense, as irreproachable; because, if these houses deal in speculations which sometimes touch upon robbery and fraud, and enrich themselves by ingenious and successful bankruptcy, they, to use their own pretentious words, honour their signature, however dishonourable that signature may be in the opinion of others.

Fervent disciples of that beautiful axiom so universally adopted before the revolution of 1848, — Get rich! — they proudly take their seats in the Chamber of Commerce, heroically assume the name of honourable, and even aim at control of the administration. Why not?

The luxury so much boasted by the old tenants was misery compared to the magnificence of M. Thomas Rousselet.

Pascal, transplanted to this house of absurd and extravagant opulence, suffered humiliations altogether different, but quite as bitter and painful as when he was with the knavish usurer in the province, who, it is

true, treated him as a despicable hireling, but had with him in his daily work frequent and familiar relations.

One would seek in vain, among the proudest nobility, the most exclusive aristocracy, anything which could approach the imperious and crushing disdain with which M. and Madame Rousselet treated their subordinates. Shut up in their gloomy offices, from which they saw the sumptuous displays of the Hôtel Rousselet, the persons employed in this house knew only by fairy-like tradition or fabulous legend the gorgeous wonders of these parlours and this dining-room, from which they were absolutely excluded by the dignity of Madame Rousselet, who was as haughty and domineering as the first lady of the chamber to a princess of Lorraine or Rohan.

Although of a new class, these humiliations were not the less galling to Pascal; he now felt more than ever his dependence, his nothingness, and the yoke of the opulent banker chafed him far more than the abuse of the usurer; but our hero, faithful to his plans, hid his wounds, smiled at blows, and licked the varnished boot which sometimes deigned to amuse itself by kicking him, redoubling labour, study, and shrewdness, until he learned the practice of this house, which he considered the perfect pattern of business enterprise, whose motto was:

"Get as much money as possible with the least money possible by all the means possible, carefully protecting yourself from the police and the court."

The margin is a large one, and, as can be easily seen, one can operate there at pleasure.

Thus passed five or six years. The imagination revolts at the accumulation of bitterness, hatred, anger, venom, and malice in the depths of this calculating and vindictive soul, always calm without, like the black and gloomy surface of a poisonous morass.

One day M. Pascal learned the death of his father.

The peddler's savings, considerably increased by skilful financial manipulation, had attained a very high figure. Once possessed of this capital, Pascal swore that he would amass a great fortune by untiring diligence and fortitude, by knowing what to do, and, still more, by knowing how to take; for, argued he, one must risk something, and, if need be, go outside of the straight and narrow path of lawfulness. Our hero kept his oath. He left the house of Rousselet. Ability, chance, fraud, luck, adroitness, and the laws of the time all contributed to his success. He gained important sums, rewarding with cash the friendship of an agent, who, keeping him well informed, put it in his power to handle safely seventy thousand on the Exchange, and lay up almost two millions. A short time afterward an intelligent and adventurous broker, versed in the business of London, helped him to see the possibility of realising immense profit, by boldly engaging in railway speculations, then altogether new in England. Pascal went to London, engaged successfully in an enterprise which soon assumed unheard-of proportions, threw his whole fortune upon one cast of the die, and, realising in time, came back to France with fifteen millions. Then, as cool and prudent as he had been adventurous, and naturally endowed with great financial talent, his only thought was to continually increase this unexpected fortune; he succeeded, availing himself of every opportunity with rare skill, living comfortably, satisfying, at any cost, his numerous sensual desires, but never attracting attention by any exterior display or luxury, and always dining at a public house. In this way he scarcely spent the fifth part of his income, which, furnishing new capital each year, constantly added to the fortune which successful speculation as constantly augmented.

Then, as we have said, came to Pascal his great and terrible day of reprisal.

This soul, hardened by so many years of humiliation

and hatred, became implacable, and found a thousand cruel delights in making others feel the weight of the money yoke which he had worn so long.

His keenest suffering had come from the vassalage, the servitude, and complete effacement of self in which he had been held for so long a time under the tyranny of his opulent employers. Now, his pleasure was to impose this servitude on others, — on some, by exercising their natural servility, on others, by compelling them to submit to hard necessity, thus symbolising in himself the almighty power of money, holding all who came within his grasp in absolute slavery, from the petty merchant whom he commanded to the prince of royal blood who humbled himself to obtain a loan. This awful despotism, which the man who lends exercises over the man whose necessities force him to borrow, Pascal wielded and enjoyed with all the refinement and delicacy of an incredible barbarity. We hear often of the power of Satan over souls. M. Pascal was able to destroy or torture as many and more souls than Satan.

Once in his power, through credit, loan, or partnership, — often granted with a show of perfect good-nature, and not unfrequently offered with a duplicity which looked like generosity, though always on solid security, — a man belonged to himself no longer; he had, as was commonly said, sold his soul to Satan-Pascal.

He calculated and arranged his bargains with a skill which seemed infernal.

A commercial crisis would arrive, — capital not be found, or at such exorbitant interest that merchants, at other times solvent and prompt in payment, saw themselves in extreme embarrassment, often upon the brink of failure. M. Pascal, perfectly instructed and certain of covering his advances by merchandise or property, granted or proposed assistance at enormous interest, with the invariable condition that he was to be reimbursed at his will, hastening to add that he would

not exercise his right, inasmuch as his own advantage would be gained by keeping his money at interest; but by habit or caprice, as he argued, he always held to this express condition, to be reimbursed at his will.

The alternative was cruel indeed for the unhappy ones whom Satan-Pascal tempted: on one hand, the ruin of a prosperous industry; on the other, an unexpected aid, so easily offered that it might pass for a generous service. The impossibility of finding capital, even at ruinous rates, and the confidence which M. Pascal knew how to inspire, rendered the temptation most powerful, a temptation all the more seductive by the insinuating kindness of the multi-millionaire, who came, as he declared, as a financial providence to the assistance of honest, labouring people.

In a word, everything conspired to stifle suspicion; they accepted. From that time Pascal possessed them.

Beset by the fear of an immediate demand for repayment which must reduce them to a desperate condition from which they could not hope to rise, they had but one aim, to please M. Pascal, but one dread, to displease M. Pascal, who was master of their fate.

It not infrequently happened that our Satan did not at first use his power, and, by a refinement of wicked malice, would play the part of a kind man, a benefactor, taking a fiendish pleasure in hearing the benedictions with which his victims loaded him, leaving them for a long time in the error which led them to adore their benevolent friend; then, by degrees, according to his humour, he revealed himself slowly, never employing threats, rudeness, or passion, but, on the contrary, affecting an insinuating sweetness which in itself became frightful. Circumstances the most insignificant and puerile offered him a thousand means of tormenting the persons he held in his absolute power.

For instance, he would arrive at the house of one of his vassals, so to speak. Perhaps the man was going

with his wife and children to some family reunion, long before arranged.

"I have come to dine with you without ceremony to-day, my friends," this Satan would say.

"My God, M. Pascal! how sorry we are! To-day is my mother's birthday, and you see we are just getting ready to go to dine with her. It is an anniversary we never fail to celebrate."

"Ah! that is very provoking, as I hoped to spend my evening with you."

"And do you think it is less annoying to us, dear M. Pascal?"

"Bah! you could very easily give up a family reunion for me. After all, your mother would not die if you were not there."

"Oh, my dear M. Pascal, that is impossible! It would be the first time since our marriage that we failed in this little family ceremony."

"Come, you surely will do that for me."

"But, M. Pascal —"

"I tell you, you will do that for your good M. Pascal, will you not?"

"We would like to do it with all our heart, but —"

"What! you refuse me that — me — the first thing I have ever asked of you?"

And M. Pascal put such an emphasis on the word *me* that the whole family suddenly trembled; they felt, as is vulgarly said, their master, and knowing of the strange caprice of the capitalist, they submitted sadly rather than offend the dreadful man upon whom their fate depended. They gave up the visit and improvised a dinner. They tried to smile, to have a cheerful air, and not to appear to regret the family festivity which they had renounced. But soon another fear begins to oppress their hearts; the dinner is becoming more and more sad and constrained. M. Pascal professes a sort of pathetic astonishment, as he complains with a sigh:

"Come, now, I have interfered with your plans; you feel bitterly toward me, alas! I see it."

"Ah, M. Pascal!" cried the unhappy family, more and more disquieted, "how can you conceive such a thought?"

"Oh, I am not mistaken. I see it, I feel it, because my heart tells me so. Eh, my God! just to think of it! It is always a great wrong to put friendship to the proof, even in the smallest things, because they serve sometimes to measure great ones. I, — yes, I, — who counted on you as true and good friends! — yet it was a deception, perhaps."

And Satan-Pascal put his hand over his eyes, got up from the table, and went out of the house with a grieved and afflicted air, leaving the miserable inmates in unspeakable anguish, because he no longer believed in their friendship, and thought them ungrateful, — he who could in one moment plunge them in an abyss of woe by demanding the money he had so generously offered. The gratitude that he expected from them was their only assurance of his continued assistance.

We have insisted on these circumstances, trifling as they may seem perhaps, but whose result was so cruel, because we wished to give an example of how M. Pascal tortured his victims.

Let one judge after that of the degrees of torture to which he was capable of subjecting them, when so insignificant a fact as we have mentioned offered such food to his calculating cruelty.

He was a monster, it must be admitted.

There are Neros, unhappily, everywhere and in every age, but who would dare say that Pascal could have reached such a degree of perversity without the pernicious influences and terrible resentments which his soul, irritated by a degrading servitude, had nourished for so long a time?

The word reprisal does not excuse the cruelty of this

man; it explains itself. Man rarely becomes wicked without a cause. Evil owes its birth to evil.

M. Pascal thus portrayed, we will precede him by one hour to the home of M. Charles Dutertre.

CHAPTER V.

THE factory of M. Dutertre, devoted to the manufacture of locomotives for railroads, occupied an immense site in the Faubourg St. Marceau, and its tall brick chimneys, constantly smoking, designated it at a great distance.

M. Dutertre and his family lived in a small house separated from the workshops by a large garden.

At the moment we introduce the reader into this modest dwelling, an air of festivity reigned there; every one in the house seemed to be occupied with hospitable preparation. A young and active servant had just finished arranging the table in the middle of the dining-room, the window of which looked out upon the garden, and which bordered upon a small kitchen separated from the landing-place by a glass partition, panes set in an unpolished frame. An old cook woman went to and fro with a bewildered air in this culinary laboratory, from which issued whiffs of appetising odours, which sometimes pervaded the dining-room.

In the parlour, furnished with walnut covered in yellow Utrecht velvet and curtains of white muslin, other preparations were going on. Two vases of white porcelain, ornamenting the chimneypiece, had just been filled with fresh flowers; between these two vases, replacing the ornamental clock, was a miniature locomotive under a glass globe, a veritable masterpiece of mechanism and ironmongery. On the black pedestal of

this trinket of iron, copper, and steel one could see engraved the words:

To M. Charles Dutertre.
His grateful workmen.

Téniers or Gérard Dow would have made a charming picture of the family group in this parlour.

A blind old man, with a venerable and melancholy face encircled by long white hair falling over his shoulders, was seated in an armchair, holding two children on his knees, — a little boy of three years old and a little girl of five, — two angels of beauty and grace.

The little boy, dark and rosy, with great black eyes as soft as velvet, every now and then would look at his pretty blue casimir shirt and white trousers with the utmost satisfaction, but was most of all delighted with his white silk stockings striped with crimson, and his black morocco shoes with ribbon bows.

The little girl, named Madeleine for an intimate friend of the mother who was godmother to the child, was fair and rosy, with lovely blue eyes, and wore a pretty white dress. Her shoulders and arms were bare, and her legs were only half covered by dainty Scotch socks. To tell how many dimples were in those shoulders, on those arms, and in those fat little cheeks, so red and fresh and smooth, would have required a mother's computation, and she could only have learned by the number of kisses she gave them.

Standing by and leaning on the back of the old blind man's chair, Madame Dutertre was listening with a mother's interest and earnestness to the chirping of the little warblers that the grandfather held on his knees, talking of this and of that, in that infantine jargon which mothers know how to translate with such rare sagacity.

Madame Sophie Dutertre was only twenty-five years

old, and, although slightly marked by smallpox, had unusually regular and beautiful features. It would be difficult to imagine a more gracious or attractive countenance, a more refined or agreeable smile, which was the ideal of sweetness and amiability. Superb hair, teeth of pearl, a dazzling complexion, and an elegant stature rendered her a charming presence under any circumstances, and when she raised her large, bright, limpid eyes to her husband, who was then standing on the other side of the blind old grandfather, love and maternity gave to this tender glance an expression at the same time pathetic and passionate, for the marriage of Sophie and Charles Dutertre had been a marriage of love.

The only fault — if a fault could be said to pertain to Sophie Dutertre — was, as careful and fastidious as she was about the attire of her children, she gave very little attention to her own toilet. An unbecoming, badly made stuff dress disparaged her elegant figure; her little foot was by no means irreproachably shod, and her beautiful brown hair was arranged with as little taste as care.

Frank and resolute, intelligent and kind, such was the character of M. Dutertre, then about twenty-eight years old. His keen eye, full of fire, and his robust, yet slender figure announced an active, energetic nature. A civil engineer, a man of science and study, as capable of solving difficult problems with the pen as of handling the file and the iron hammer; knowing how to command as well as to execute; honouring and elevating manual labour and sometimes practising it, whether by example or encouragement; scrupulously just; loyal and confiding almost to temerity; paternal, firm and impartial toward his numerous workmen; possessing an antique simplicity of manner; enthusiastic in labour, and in love with his creatures of iron and copper and steel, his life was divided between the three great things which constitute the happiness of man, — love, family, and labour.

Charles Dutertre had only one sorrow, the blindness of his father, and yet this affliction was the opportunity for such tender devotion, such delicate and constant care, that Dutertre and his wife endeavoured to console themselves in the thought that it enabled them to prove to the old man their affection and fidelity. Notwithstanding the preparations for the approaching festivity, Charles Dutertre had postponed shaving until the next day, and his working suit which he kept on showed here and there upon the gray cloth spots and stains and burns which gave evidence of his contact with the forge. His forehead was high and noble-looking, his hands, which were white and nervous, were somewhat blackened by the smoke of the workshops. He seemed to forget, in his laborious and untiring activity, or in the refreshing repose which succeeded it, that personal care which some men very properly never renounce.

Such were the persons assembled in the modest parlour of the little home. The two children, chatting incessantly and at the same time, tried to make themselves understood by their grandfather, who responded with the best will in the world, and, smiling sweetly, would ask them:

"What did you say, my little Augustus, and what do you say, my little Madeleine?"

"Will madame the interpreter have the kindness to translate this pretty chirping into common language?" said Charles Dutertre to his wife, as he laughed merrily.

"Why, Charles, do you not understand?"

"Not at all."

"Do you not understand the children, father?" said she to the old man.

"I thought I heard something about Sunday dress," said the old man, smiling, "but it was so complicated that I gave up all hope of comprehending it."

"It was something very like that, — come, come,

only mothers and grandfathers understand little children," said Sophie, triumphantly.

Then turning to the children, she said:

"My dears, did you not say to your grandfather, 'To-day is Sunday because we have on our pretty new clothes'?"

The little blonde Madeleine opened her great blue eyes wide, and bowed her curly head in the affirmative.

"You are the Champollion of mothers!" cried Charles Dutertre, while the old man said to the two children:

"No, to-day is not Sunday, my children, but it is a feast-day."

Here Sophie was obliged to interfere again, and translate.

"They ask why it is a feast-day, father."

"Because we are going to have a friend visit us, and when a friend comes to see us, it is always a feast," replied the old man, with a smile somewhat constrained.

"Ah, we must not forget the purse," said Dutertre to his wife.

"Wait a moment," replied Sophie, gaily, to her husband, as she pointed to a little rose-coloured box on the table, "do you think that I, any more than you, could forget our good M. Pascal, our worthy benefactor?"

The grandfather, turning to little Madeleine, said, as he kissed her brow.

"We are expecting M. Pascal,—you know M. Pascal."

Madeleine again opened her great blue eyes; her face took on an expression almost of fear, and shaking her little curly head sadly, she said:

"He is bad."

"M. Pascal?" said Sophie.

"Oh, yes, very bad!" replied the child.

"But," said the young mother, "my dear Madeleine, why do you think that M. Pascal is bad?"

"Come, Sophie," said Charles Dutertre, smiling, "you

are not going to stop to listen to this childish talk about our worthy friend, are you?"

Strange enough, the old man's countenance at once assumed a vague expression of disquietude, and whether he trusted the instinct and penetration of children, or whether he was influenced by another thought, far from making a jest of Madeleine's words, as his son did, he leaned over the child, and said:

"Tell us, my child, why M. Pascal is bad."

The little blonde shook her head, and said, innocently:

"Don't know, — but, very sure, he is bad."

Sophie, who felt a good deal like the grandfather on the subject of the wonderful sagacity of children, could not overcome a slight feeling of alarm, for there are secret, mysterious relations between a mother and the children of her blood. An indefinable presentiment, against which Sophie struggled with all her strength, because she thought it absurd and foolish, told her that the little girl had made no mistake in reading the character of M. Pascal, although she had heretofore esteemed him as the impersonation of goodness and generosity.

Charles Dutertre, never suspecting the impressions of his wife and father, replied, smiling:

"Now it is my turn to give a lesson to this grandfather and this mother, who pretend to understand the prattle and feeling of children so well. Our excellent friend has a rough exterior, heavy eyebrows, and a black beard and dark skin and unprepossessing speech; he is, in a word, a sort of benevolent churl, but he does not deserve the name of bad, even upon the authority of this little blonde."

At this moment the servant entered, and said to her mistress:

"Madame, Mlle. Hubert is here with her maid, and — "

"Antonine? What good fortune!" said Sophie, rising immediately, and going to meet the young girl.

"Madame," added the servant, mysteriously, "Agatha wants to know if M. Pascal likes his peas with sugar or bacon?"

"Charles!" called Sophie, merrily, to her husband, "this is a grave question, what do you think of it?"

"Make one dish of peas with sugar, and the other with bacon," replied Charles, thoughtfully.

"It takes mathematicians to solve problems," replied Sophie, then, taking her children by the hand, she added: "I want Antonine to see how large and pretty they are."

"But I hope you will persuade Mlle. Hubert to come in, or I must go after her."

"I am going to take the children to their nurse, and I will return with Antonine."

"Charles," said the old man, rising, when the young woman had disappeared, "give me your arm, please."

"Certainly, father; but M. Pascal will arrive before long."

"And you insist upon my being present, my son?"

"You know, father, all the respect that our friend has for you, and how glad he is to show it to you."

After a moment's silence, the old man replied:

"Do you know that, since you have dismissed your old cashier, Marcelange, he often visits M. Pascal?"

"This is the first time I have heard it."

"Does it not seem singular to you?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Listen to me, Charles, I —"

"I beg your pardon, father," replied Dutertre, interrupting the old man, "now I think of it, nothing is more natural; I have not seen our friend since I sent Marcelange away; Marcelange knows of our friendship for M. Pascal, and he perhaps has gone to see him, to beg him to intercede with me for him."

"It can be so explained," said the old man, thoughtfully. "Yet —"

"Well, father?"

"Your little girl's impression struck me forcibly."

"Come, father," replied Dutertre, smiling, "you say that to compliment my wife. Unfortunately, she is not present to hear you. But I will report your gallantry to her."

"I say so, Charles," replied the old man, in a solemn tone, "because, as childish as it may appear, your little girl's impression seems to me to have a certain weight, and when I recall some other circumstances, and think of the frequent interviews between Marcelange and M. Pascal, I confess to you that I feel in spite of myself a vague distrust of your friend."

"Oh, father, father," replied Charles Dutertre, with emotion, "of course you do not mean it, but you distress me very much. Doubt our generous benefactor, M. Pascal! Ah, banish your suspicions, father, for this is the first sorrow I have felt in a long time. To suspect without proof, to be influenced by the passing impression of a little child," added Dutertre, with all the warmth of his natural generosity, "that is unjust, indeed!"

"Charles!" said the old man, wounded by his son's resentment.

"Oh, pardon me, pardon me, father," cried Dutertre, taking the old man's hands in his own, "I was too quick, forgive me; for a moment friendship spoke louder than my respect for you."

"My poor Charles," replied the old man, affectionately, "Heaven grant that you may be right in differing from me, and, far from complaining of your readiness to defend a friend, I am glad of it. But I hear some one coming, — take me back to my room."

At the moment M. Dutertre closed the door of the chamber where he had conducted the blind man, Mlle. Hubert entered the parlour accompanied by Madame Dutertre.

CHAPTER VI.

NOTWITHSTANDING the triteness of the mythological comparison, we must be pardoned for saying that never Hebe, the cupbearer to the gods of Olympus, in all the brilliancy of her superhuman beauty, united in herself more resplendent charms than did, in her terrestrial loveliness, the modest maiden, Antonine Hubert, whose love secret with Frantz M. Pascal had surprised.

What seemed most attractive in this young girl was the beauty of fifteen years and a half which combined the grace and freshness of the child with the budding charms of young womanhood, — enchanting age, still full of mysteries and chaste ignorances, a pure dawn, white and transparent, that the first palpitations of an innocent love would colour with the exquisite tint of the full-blown rose.

Such was the age of Antonine, and she had the charm and all the charms of that age.

To humanise our Hebe, we will make her descend from her pedestal, and, veiling her delicate and beautiful form, will clothe her in an elegant summer robe ; a black silk mantle will hide the exquisite contour of her bust, and a straw hat, lined with silk as rosy as her cheeks, allowing us a view of her chestnut tresses, will serve as a frame for the oval face, as fresh, as fair, and as soft as that of the child she has just embraced.

As she entered the parlour with Sophie, mademoiselle blushed slightly, for she had the timidity of her fifteen years ; then, put at ease by the cordial reception of Dutertre and his wife, she said to the latter, with a sort

of deference drawn from their old relations of child and mother, as they were called in the boarding-school where they had been brought up together:

"You do not know the good fortune which brings me here, Sophie."

"A good fortune! — so much the better, my little Antonine!"

"A letter from St. Madeleine," replied the young girl, drawing an envelope from her pocket.

"Really!" exclaimed Sophie, blushing with joy and surprise, as she reached her hand impatiently for the letter.

"What, Mlle. Antonine," said Charles Dutertre, laughing, "you are in correspondence with paradise? Though if it is true I ought not to be astonished, inasmuch — "

"Be silent, M. Tease," interrupted Sophie, "and do not make jokes about Antonine's and my best friend."

"I will be careful, — but what is the meaning of this name, St. Madeleine?"

"Why, Charles, have I not told you a thousand times about my school friend, Madeleine Silveyra, who is godmother by proxy of our little one? What are you thinking of?"

"I have a very good memory, my dear Sophie," replied Dutertre, "because I have not forgotten that this young Mexican had such a singular kind of beauty that she inspired as much surprise as admiration."

"The very same lady, my dear; after me, Madeleine acted as a mother to Antonine, as we said at school, where each large girl had the care of a child from ten to eleven years old; so, when I left school, I confided dear Antonine to the affection of St. Madeleine."

"It is just that surname which was the cause of my mistake," replied Dutertre, "a surname which seems to me very ambitious or very humble for such a pretty person, for she must be near your age."

"They gave Madeleine the name of saint at school

because she deserved it, M. Dutertre," replied Antonine, with all the seriousness of fifteen years, "and while she was my little mother they continued to call her St. Madeleine, as they did in Sophie's time."

"Was this Mlle. St. Madeleine a very austere devotee?" asked Dutertre.

"Madeleine, like all people of her country, — we gave our French form to her name of Magdalena, — gave herself to a particular devotion. She had chosen the Christ, and her adoration for her Saviour became an ecstasy," replied Sophie; "besides, she united to this enthusiastic devotion the warmest heart and the most interesting, enjoyable mind in the world. But I pray you, Charles, let me read her letter. I am impatient. Just imagine, the first letter after two years of separation! Antonine and I felt a little bitter at her silence, but you see the first remembrance we receive from her disarms us."

And taking the letter which Antonine had just given her, Sophie read, with an emotion which increased with every line.

"Dear Madeleine, always tender and affectionate, always witty and bright, always so appreciative of any remembrance of the past. After a few days' rest at Marseilles, where she has arrived from Venice, she comes to Paris, almost at the same time her letter arrives, and she thinks only of the happiness of seeing Sophie, her friend, and her little girl Antonine, and she writes in haste to both of us, and signs herself as of old, St. Madeleine."

"Then she is not married?" asked Charles Dutertre.

"I do not know, my dear," replied his wife, "she signs only her baptismal name."

"But why should I ask such an absurd question? — think of a married saint!"

At that moment the servant entered, and, stopping on the threshold of the door, made a significant sign to her mistress, who replied:

"You can speak, Julie, Mlle. Antonine is a part of the family."

"Madame," said the servant, "Agatha wants to know if she must put the chicken on the spit if M. Pascal does not come?"

"Certainly," said Madame Dutertre, "M. Pascal is a little late, but we expect him every minute."

"You are expecting some one, then, Sophie?" asked Antonine, when the servant retired. "Well, good-bye, I will see you again," added the young girl, with a sigh. "I did not come only to bring St. Madeleine's letter, I wanted to have a long chat with you. I will see you again to-morrow, dear Sophie."

"Not at all, my little Antonine. I use my authority as mother to keep my dear little girl and have her breakfast with us. It is a sort of family feast. Is it because your place was not ready, my child?"

"Come, Mlle. Antonine," said Charles, "do us the kindness to stay."

"You are a thousand times too good, M. Dutertre, but, really, I cannot accept."

"Then," replied he, "I am going to employ the greatest means of seducing you; in a word, if you will stay, you shall see the generous man who, of his own accord, came to our rescue this day a year ago, for this is the anniversary of that noble action that we are celebrating to-day."

Sophie, having forgotten the presentiment awakened in her mind by the words of her little girl, added:

"Yes, my little Antonine, at the very moment, the critical moment, when ruin threatened our business, M. Pascal said to Charles: 'Monsieur, I do not know you personally, but I know you are as just as you are laborious and intelligent; you need fifty thousand to put your business in a good condition. I offer it to you as a friend, accept it as a friend; as to interest, we will estimate that afterward, and still as a friend.'"

"That was to act nobly, indeed!" said Antonine.

"Yes," said Charles Dutertre, with profound emotion, "for it is not only my industry which he has saved, but it was the labour of the numerous workmen I employ, it was the repose of my father's old age, the happiness of my wife, the future of my children. Oh, stay with us, stay, Mlle. Antonine, the sight of such a good man is so rare, so sweet — But wait, there he is!" exclaimed M. Dutertre, as he saw M. Pascal pass the parlour window.

"I am much impressed with all Sophie and you have told me, M. Dutertre, and I regret I cannot see this generous man to whom you owe so much, but breakfast would detain me too long. I must return early. My uncle expects me, and he has passed a very painful night; in these attacks of suffering he always wants me near him, and these attacks come at any time."

Then, taking Sophie by the hand, the young girl added:

"Can I see you again soon?"

"To-morrow or day after, my dear little Antonine, I am coming to see you, and we will talk as long as you like."

The door opened; M. Pascal entered.

Antonine embraced her friend, and Sophie said to the financier, with affectionate cordiality:

"Permit me, will you not, M. Pascal, to take leave of mademoiselle. I need not say that I will hasten to return."

"No need of ceremony, my dear Madame Dutertre," stammered M. Pascal, in spite of his assurance astonished to see Antonine again, and he followed her with an intense, surly gaze until she had left the room.

CHAPTER VII.

M. PASCAL, at the sight of Antonine, whom he saw for the second time that morning, was, as we have said, a moment bewildered with surprise and admiration before this fresh and innocent beauty.

"At last, here you are!" said Charles Dutertre, effusively extending both hands to M. Pascal when he found himself alone with him. "Do you know we were beginning to question your promptness? All the week my wife and I have looked forward with joy to this day, for, after the anniversary of the birth of our children, the day that we celebrate with the most pleasure is the one from which dates, thanks to you, the security of their future. It is so good, so sweet to feel, by the gratitude of our hearts, the lofty nobleness of those generous deeds which honour him who offers as much as him who accepts."

M. Pascal did not appear to have heard the words of M. Dutertre, and said to him:

"Who is that young girl who just went out of here?"

"Mlle. Antonine Hubert."

"Is she related to President Hubert, who has lately been so ill?"

"She is his niece."

"Ah!" said Pascal, thoughtfully.

"You know if my father were not with us," replied M. Dutertre, smiling, "our little festivity would not be complete. I am going to inform him of your arrival, my dear M. Pascal."

And as he stepped to the door of the old man's chamber, M. Pascal stopped him with a gesture, and said:

"Does not President Hubert reside —"

And as he hesitated, Dutertre added:

"In Faubourg St. Honoré. The garden joins that of the Élysée-Bourbon."

"Has this young girl lived with her uncle long?"

Dutertre, quite surprised at this persistent inquiry concerning Antonine, answered:

"About three months ago M. Hubert went to Nice for Antonine, where she lived after the death of her parents."

"And is Madame Dutertre very intimate with this young person?"

"They were together at boarding-school, where Sophie was a sort of mother to her, and ever since they have been upon the most affectionate terms."

"Ah!" said Pascal, again relapsing into deep thought.

This man possessed a great and rare faculty which had contributed to the accumulation of his immense fortune, — he could with perfect ease detach himself from any line of thought, and enter upon a totally different set of ideas. Thus, after the interview of Frantz and Antonine which he had surprised, and which had excited him so profoundly, he was able to talk with the archduke upon business affairs, and to torture him with deliberate malice.

In the same way, after this meeting with Antonine at the house of Dutertre, he postponed, so to speak, his violent resentment and his plans regarding the young girl, and said, with perfect good-nature, to Sophie's husband:

"While we wait for the return of your wife, I have a little favour to ask of you."

"At last!" exclaimed Dutertre, rubbing his hands with evident satisfaction; "better late than never."

"You had a cashier named Marcelange?"

"Yes, unfortunately."

"Unfortunately?"

"He committed, while in my employ, not an act of dishonesty, for I should not, at any price, have saved him from the punishment he merited; but he was guilty of an indelicacy under circumstances which proved to me that the man was a wretch, and I dismissed him."

"Marcelange told me, in fact, that you sent him away."

"You are acquainted with him?" replied Dutertre, in surprise, as he recalled his father's words.

"Some days ago he came to see me. He wished to get a position in the Durand house."

"He? Among such honourable people?"

"Why not? He was employed by you."

"But, as I have told you, my dear M. Pascal, I sent him away as soon as his conduct was known to me."

"I understand perfectly. Only, as he is without a position, he must have, in order to enter the Durand house, a letter of recommendation from you, as the Durands are not willing to accept the poor fellow otherwise; now this letter, my dear Dutertre, I come honestly to ask of you."

After a moment of astonishment, Dutertre said, with a smile:

"After all, I ought not to be astonished. You are so kind! This man is full of artifice and falsity, and knows how to take advantage of your confidence."

"I believe, really, that Marcelange is very false, very sly; but that need not prevent your giving me the letter I ask."

Dutertre could not believe that he had heard aright, or that he understood M. Pascal, and replied:

"I beg your pardon, sir. I have just told you that—"

"You have reason to complain of an act of indelicacy

on the part of this fellow, but, bah! what does that matter?"

"What! M. Pascal, you ask, what does it matter? Know then, that, in my eyes, this man's act was even more blamable than fraud in money matters."

"I believe you, my dear Dutertre, I believe you; there is no better judge of honourable dealing than yourself. Marcelange seems to me truly a cunning rascal, and, if I must tell you, it is on that account that I insist — insist very much on his being recommended by you."

"Honestly, M. Pascal, I believe that I should be acting a dishonourable part in aiding the entrance of Marcelange into a thoroughly respectable house."

"Come, now, do this for me!"

"You are not speaking seriously, M. Pascal?"

"I am speaking very seriously."

"After what I have just confided to you?"

"My God! yes, why not?"

"You! you! honour and loyalty itself!"

"I, the impersonation of honour and loyalty, ask you to give me this letter."

Dutertre looked at M. Pascal, bewildered; then, after a moment's reflection, he replied, in a tone of affectionate reproach:

"Ah, sir, after a year has elapsed, was this proof necessary?"

"What proof?"

"To propose an unworthy action to me, that you might feel assured that I deserved your confidence."

"My dear Dutertre, I repeat to you that I must have this letter. It concerns an affair which is very important to me."

M. Pascal was speaking seriously. Dutertre could no longer doubt it. He then remembered the words of his father, the antipathy of his little girl, and, seized with a vague dread, he replied, in a constrained voice:

"So, monsieur, you forget the grave responsibility which would rest upon me if I did what you desire."

"Eh, my God! my brave Dutertre, if we only asked easy things of our friends!"

"You ask of me an impossible thing, monsieur."

"So, then, you refuse to do it for me, do you?"

"M. Pascal," said Dutertre, with an accent at the same time firm and full of emotion, "I owe you everything. There is not a day that I, my wife, and my father do not recall the fact that, one year ago, without your unexpected succour, our own ruin, and the ruin of many other people, would have been inevitable. All that gratitude can inspire of respect and affection we feel for you. Every possible proof of devotion we are ready to give you with pleasure, with happiness, but—"

"One word more, and you will understand me," interrupted M. Pascal. "Since I must tell you, Dutertre, I have a special interest in having some one who belongs to me — entirely to me, you understand, entirely mine — in the business house of Durand. Now, you can comprehend that, holding Marcelange by this letter which you will give me for him, and by what I know of his antecedents, I can make him my creature, my blind instrument. This is entirely between us, my dear Dutertre, and, counting on your absolute discretion, I will go further even, and I will tell you that—"

"Not a word more on this subject, sir, I beg," exclaimed Dutertre, with increasing surprise and distress, for up to that time he had believed Pascal to be a man of incorruptible integrity. "Not a word more. There are secrets whose confidence one does not wish to accept."

"Why?"

"Because they might become very embarrassing, sir."

"Really! The confidences of an old friend can

become an annoyance! Very well, I will keep them. Then, give me this letter without any more explanations."

"I repeat to you, sir, that it is impossible for me to do so."

M. Pascal bit his lips and unconsciously knit his eyebrows; as surprised as he was angry at the refusal of Dutertre, he could scarcely believe that a man who was dependent upon him could have the audacity to oppose his will, or the courage to sacrifice the present and the future to a scruple of honour.

However, as he had a special interest in this letter, he replied, with a tone of affectionate reproach:

"What! You refuse me that, my dear Dutertre,— refuse me, your friend?"

"I refuse you above all,—you who have had faith enough in my incorruptible honesty to advance for me, without even knowing me, a considerable amount."

"Come, my dear Dutertre, do not make me more adventurous than I am. Are not your honesty, your intelligence, your interest even, and at any rate the material in your factory, sufficient security for my capital? Am I not always in a safe position, by the right I reserve to myself, to exact repayment at will? A right which I will not exercise in your case for a long time, as I know. I am too much interested in you to do that, Dutertre," as he saw astonishment and anguish depicted in Dutertre's face, "but, indeed, let us suppose,—oh, it will not come to that, thank God,—but let us suppose that, in the constrained condition and trying crisis in which business is at present, I should say to you to-day, M. Dutertre, I shall need my money in a month, and I withdraw my credit from you."

"Great God!" exclaimed Dutertre, terrified, staggered at the bare supposition of such a disaster, "I would go into bankruptcy! It would be my ruin, the loss of my business; I would be obliged, perhaps, to work with my

own hands, if I could find employment, to support my infirm father, my wife, and my children."

"Will you be silent, you wicked man, and not put such painful things before my eyes! You are going to spoil my whole day!" exclaimed M. Pascal, with irresistible good-nature, taking Dutertre's hands in his own. "Do you speak in this way, when I, like you, am making a festivity of this morning? Well, well, what is the matter? How pale you look, now!"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Dutertre, wiping the drops of cold sweat from his brow, "but at the very thought of such an unexpected blow which would strike all that I hold dearest in the world, my honour, my family, my labour — Ah, yes, monsieur, you are right, let us drive this thought far from us, it is too horrible."

"Eh! my God, that is just what I was saying to you; do not let us make this charming day a sad one. So, to finish the matter," added M. Pascal, cheerfully, "let us hurry over business affairs, let us empty our bag, as the saying is. Give me this letter, and we will talk no more about it."

Dutertre started, a frightful pain wrung his heart, and he replied:

"Such persistence astonishes and distresses me, monsieur. I repeat to you it is absolutely impossible for me to do what you ask."

"What a child you are! my persistent request proves to you how much importance I attach to this affair."

"That may be, monsieur."

"And why do I attach such importance to it, my brave Dutertre? It is because this matter interests you as well as myself."

"What do you mean, monsieur?"

"Eh! without doubt. My combination with the house of Durand failing, since your refusal would prevent my employing this knave Marcelange, as I desire (you do not wish to know my secrets, so I am forced to keep

them), perhaps I should be compelled for certain reasons," added M. Pascal, pronouncing his words slowly, and looking at his victim with a sharp, cold eye, "I say, perhaps I should be compelled — and it would draw the blood from my heart — to demand the repayment of my capital, and withdraw my credit from you."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Dutertre, clasping his hands and looking as pale as a ghost.

"So you see, bad man, in what an atrocious position you put yourself. Force me to an action which, I repeat to you, would tear my soul —"

"But, monsieur, a moment ago you assured me that —"

"Zounds! my intention would be to let you keep this wretched capital as long as possible. You pay me the interest with remarkable punctuality, it was perfectly well placed, and, thanks to our terms of liquidation, you would have been free in ten years, and I should have made a good investment in doing you a service."

"Really, monsieur," murmured Dutertre, overwhelmed, "such were your promises, if not written, at least verbal, and the generosity of your offer, the loyalty of your character, all gave me perfect confidence. God grant that I may not have to consider myself the most rash, the most stupid man, to have trusted your word!"

"As to that, Dutertre, you can be at peace with yourself; at that period of commercial crisis, at least as terrible as it is to-day, you could not have found anywhere the capital that I offered you at such a moderate rate."

"I know it, monsieur."

"Then you can, and you must, indeed, by sheer force of necessity, accept the condition I put upon this loan."

"But, monsieur," cried Dutertre, with inexpressible alarm, "I appeal to your honour! You have expressly promised me that —"

"Eh, my God, yes, I promised you, saving the superior force of events; and unfortunately your refusal

to give this poor little letter creates an event of stronger force which places me in the painful — the grievous necessity of asking you for repayment of my money."

"But, monsieur, it is an unworthy action that you ask me to do, think of it."

At this moment was heard the sweet ringing laughter of Sophie, who was approaching the parlour.

"Ah, monsieur," said her husband, "not a word of this before my wife, because it may not be your final resolve. I hope that —"

Charles Dutertre could not finish, because Sophie had entered the parlour.

The unhappy man could only make a supplicating gesture to Pascal, who responded to it by a sign of sympathetic intelligence.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Sophie Dutertre entered the parlour, where were seated her husband and M. Pascal, the gracious countenance of the young woman, more flushed than usual, the light throbbing of her bosom, and her moist eyes, all testified to a recent fit of hilarious laughter.

"Ah, ah, Madame Dutertre!" said M. Pascal, cheerfully. "I heard you distinctly; you were laughing like a lunatic."

Then, turning to Dutertre, who was trying to hide his intense distress and to hold on to a last hope, he said:

"How gay happiness makes these young women! Nothing like the sight of them puts joy in the heart, does it, my brave Dutertre?"

"I was laughing in spite of myself, I assure you, my dear M. Pascal," replied Sophie.

"In spite of yourself?" answered our hero. "Why, does some sorrow —"

"Sorrow? Oh, no, thank God! But I was more disposed to tenderness than gaiety. This dear Antonine, if you only knew her, Charles," added the young woman, with sweet emotion, addressing her husband. "I cannot tell you how she has moved me, what a pure, touching confession she has made to me, for the heart of the poor child was too full, and she could not go away without telling me all."

And a tear of sympathy moistened Sophie's beautiful eyes.

At the name of Antonine, M. Pascal, notwithstanding his great control over himself, started. His thoughts

concerning this young girl, for a moment postponed, returned more ardent, more persistent than ever, and as Sophie was wiping her eyes he threw upon her a penetrating glance, trying to divine what he might hope from her, in reference to the plan he meditated.

Sophie soon spoke, addressing her husband:

"But, Charles, — I will relate it all to you, after awhile, — while I was absorbed in thinking of my interview with Antonine, my little Madeleine came to me, and said in her baby language such ridiculous things that I could not keep from bursting into laughter. But, pardon me, M. Pascal, your heart will understand and excuse, I know, all a mother's weakness."

"Do you say that to me," replied Pascal, cordially, "a bachelor, — you say it to me, a good old fellow?"

"That is true," added Sophie, affectionately, "but we love you so much here, you see, that we think you are right to call yourself a good old fellow. Ask Charles if he will contradict my words."

Dutertre replied with a constrained smile, and he had the strength and the courage to restrain his feelings before his wife to such a degree that she, occupied with M. Pascal, had not the least suspicion of her husband's anxiety. So, going to the table and taking up the purse she had embroidered, she presented it to M. Pascal, and said to him, in a voice full of emotion:

"My dear M. Pascal, this purse is the fruit of my evening work, — evenings that I have spent here with my husband, with his excellent father, and with my children. If each one of these little steel beads could speak, all would tell you how many times your name has been pronounced among us, with all the affection and gratitude it deserves."

"Ah, thank you, thank you, my dear Madame Dutertre," replied Pascal, "I cannot tell you how much I appreciate this pretty present, this lovely remembrance, — only, you see, it embarrasses me a little."

"How is that?"

"You come to give me something, and I came to ask you something."

"What happiness! Ask, ask, by all means, dear M. Pascal."

Then turning to her husband, with surprise, she said:

"Charles, what are you doing there, seated before that desk?"

"M. Pascal will excuse me. I just recollected that I had neglected to examine some notes relative to important business," replied Dutertre, turning the leaves of some papers, to keep himself in countenance, and to hide from his wife, to whom he had turned his back, the pain which showed itself in his face.

"My dear," said Sophie, in a tone of tender reproach; "can you not lay aside work now and wait until —"

"Madame Dutertre, I shall rebel if you disturb your husband on my account," cried M. Pascal, "do I not know the exactness of business? Come, come, happy woman that you are, thanks to the indefatigable labour of brave Dutertre, who stands to-day at the head of his business."

"And who has encouraged him in his zeal for work, but you, M. Pascal? If Charles is as you say at the head of his industry, if our future and that of our children is ever assured, do we not owe it to you?"

"My dear Madame Dutertre, you confuse me so that I shall not know how to ask the little service I expect from you."

"Oh, I forgot it," replied Sophie, smiling, "but we were speaking of more important services that you have rendered us, were we not? But tell us quick, quick, — what is it?" said the young woman, with an eagerness which gave her an additional charm.

"What I am going to tell you will surprise you, perhaps?"

"So much the better, I adore surprises."

"Ah, well, the isolation of bachelor life weighs upon me, and —"

"And?"

"I wish to get married."

"Truly!"

"Does it astonish you? I am sure it does."

"You are entirely mistaken, for in my opinion you ought to get married."

"Pray, why?"

"How often I have said to myself, sooner or later this good M. Pascal, who lives so much by his heart, will enjoy the sweets of family life, and, if I must confess my vain presumption," added Sophie, "I said to myself, it is impossible that the sight of the happiness Charles and I enjoy should not some day suggest the idea of marriage to M. Pascal. Now, was I not happy in foreseeing your intention?"

"Have your triumph, then, dear Madame Dutertre, because, in fact, seduced by your example and that of your husband, I desire to make, as you two did, a marriage of love."

"Can any other marriage be possible?" replied Sophie, shrugging her shoulders with a most graceful movement, and, without reflecting upon the thirty-eight years of M. Pascal, she added:

"And you are loved?"

"My God, that depends on you."

"On me?"

"Absolutely.

"On me?" exclaimed Sophie, with increasing surprise. "Do you hear, Charles, what M. Pascal says."

"I hear," replied Dutertre, who, not less astonished than his wife, was listening with involuntary anxiety.

"How can I, M. Pascal, how can I make you loved?" asked Sophie.

"You can do so, my dear Madame Dutertre."

"Although it seems incomprehensible to me, bless

God for it. If I have the magic power you attribute to me, my dear M. Pascal," replied Sophie, with her sweetest smile, "then you will be loved, as you deserve to be."

"Counting on your promise, then, I will not travel four roads, but confess at once, my dear Madame Dutertre, that I am in love with Mlle. Antonine Hubert."

"Antonine!" exclaimed Sophie, astounded; while Dutertre, seated before his desk, turned abruptly to his wife, whose astonishment he shared.

"Antonine!" replied Sophie, as if she could not believe what she had heard. "You love Antonine!"

"Yes, it is she. I met her to-day in your house, for the fourth time, only I have never spoken to her. However, my mind is made up, for I am one of those people who decide quickly and by instinct. For instance, when it was necessary for me to come to the aid of this brave Dutertre, the thing was done in two hours. Well, the ravishing beauty of Mlle. Antonine, the purity of her face, a something, I know not what, tells me that this young person has the best qualities in the world, — all has contributed to render me madly in love with her, and to desire in a marriage of love, like yours, my dear Madame Dutertre, that inward happiness, those joys of the heart, that you believe me worthy of knowing and enjoying."

"Monsieur," said Sophie, with painful embarrassment, "permit me — "

"One word more, it is love at first sight, you will say, — that may be, but there are twenty examples of love as sudden as they are deep. Besides, as I have told you, I am plainly a man of instinct, of presentiment; with a single glance of the eye, I have always judged a thing good or bad. Why should I not follow in marriage a method which has always perfectly succeeded with me? I have told you that it depends entirely on you to make Mlle. Antonine love me. I will explain. At fifteen

years, and she seems hardly to be so old as that, young girls have no wills of their own. You have acted as mother to Mlle. Antonine, as Dutertre has told me; you possess great influence over her, nothing would be more easy, by talking to her of me in a certain manner, when you shall have presented me to her, and that can be not later than to-morrow, can it not? I repeat, it will be easy for you to induce her to share my love, and to marry me. If I owe you this happiness, my dear Madame Dutertre, wait and see," added Pascal, with a tone full of emotion and sincerity. "You speak of gratitude? Well, that which you have toward me would be ingratitude, compared with what I would feel toward you!"

Sophie had listened to M. Pascal with as much grief as surprise; for she believed, and she had reason to believe, in the reality of the love, or rather the ardent desire for possession that this man felt; so she replied, with deep feeling, for it cost her much to disappoint hopes which seemed to her honourable:

"My poor M. Pascal, you must see that I am distressed not to be able to render you the first service you ask of me. I need not tell you how deeply I regret it."

"What is impossible in it?"

"Believe me, do not think of this marriage."

"Does not Mlle. Antonine deserve —"

"Antonine is an angel. I have known her from infancy. There is not a better heart, a better character, in the world."

"What you tell me, my dear Madame Dutertre, would suffice to augment my desire, if that could be done."

"I say again, this marriage is impossible."

"Well, tell me why."

"In the first place, think of it, Antonine is only fifteen and a half, and you —"

"I am thirty-eight. Is it that?"

"The difference of age is very great, you must confess, and as I would not advise my daughter or my sister to make a marriage so disproportionate, I cannot advise Antonine to do so, because I would not at any price make your unhappiness or hers."

"Oh, make yourself easy! I will answer for my own happiness."

"And that of Antonine?"

"Bah! bah! for a few years, more or less —"

"I married for love, my dear M. Pascal. I do not comprehend other marriages. Perhaps it is wrong, but indeed I think so, and I ought to tell you so, since you consult me."

"According to you, then, I am not capable of pleasing Mlle. Antonine?"

"I believe that, like Charles and myself, and like all generous hearts, she would appreciate the nobility of your character, but —"

"Permit me again, my dear Madame Dutertre, — a child of fifteen years has no settled ideas on the subject of marriage; and Mlle. Antonine has a blind confidence in you. Present me to her; tell her all sorts of good about the good man, Pascal. The affair is sure, — if you wish to do it, you can."

"Hear me, my dear M. Pascal, this conversation grieves me more than I can tell you, and to put an end to it I will trust a secret to your discretion and your loyalty."

"Very well, what is this secret?"

"Antonine loves, and is loved. Ah, M. Pascal, nothing could be purer or more affecting than this love, and, for many reasons, I am certain it will assure Antonine's happiness. Her uncle's health is precarious, and should the poor child lose him she would be obliged to live with relatives who, not without reason, inspire her with aversion. Once married according to the dictate of her heart, she can hope for a happy future, for

her warm affection is nobly placed. You must see, then, my dear M. Pascal, that, even with my influence, you would have no chance of success, and how can I give you my influence, with the approval of my conscience, leaving out of consideration the disparity of age, which, in my opinion, is an insuperable objection? I am sure, and I do not speak lightly, that the love which Antonine both feels and inspires ought to make her happy throughout her life."

At this confirmation of Antonine's love for Frantz, a secret already half understood by M. Pascal, he was filled with rage and resentment, which was all the more violent for reason of the refusal of Madame Dutertre, who declined to enter into his impossible plans; but he restrained himself with a view of attempting a last effort. Failing in that, he resolved to take a terrible revenge. So, with apparent calmness, he replied:

"Ah, so Mlle. Antonine is in love! Well, so be it; but we know, my dear Madame Dutertre, what these grand passions of young girls are, — a straw fire. You can blow it out; this beautiful love could not resist your influence."

"I assure you, M. Pascal, I would not try to influence Antonine upon this subject, for it would be useless."

"You think so?"

"I am certain of it."

"Bah! it is always worth while to try."

"But I tell you, sir, that Antonine —"

"Is in love! I understand, and more, the good old bachelor Pascal is thirty-eight, and evidently not handsome, but on the other hand he has some handsome little millions, and when this evening (for you will see her this evening, will you not? I count on it) you make this unsophisticated maiden comprehend that, if love is a good thing, money is still better, for love passes and money stays, she will follow your counsel, dismiss her lover to-morrow, and I will have no more to

say but 'Glory and thanks to you, my dear Madame Dutertre!'"

Sophie stared at M. Pascal in amazement. Her womanly sensitivity was deeply shocked, and her instinct told her that a man who could talk as M. Pascal had done was not the man of good feeling and rectitude that she had believed him to be.

At this moment, too, Dutertre rose from his chair, showing in his countenance the perplexity which agitated his mind; for the first time, his wife observed the alteration of his expression, and exclaimed as she advanced to meet him:

"My God! Charles, how pale you are! Are you in pain?"

"No, Sophie, nothing is the matter with me, — only a slight headache."

"But I tell you something else is the matter. This pallor is not natural. Oh, M. Pascal, do look at Charles!"

"Really, my good Dutertre, you do not appear at your ease."

"Nothing is the matter, sir," replied Dutertre, with an icy tone which increased Sophie's undefined fear.

She looked in silence, first at her husband, and then at M. Pascal, trying to discern the cause of the change that she saw and feared.

"Well, my dear Dutertre," said M. Pascal, "you have heard our conversation; pray join me in trying to make your dear and excellent wife comprehend that mademoiselle, notwithstanding her foolish, childish love, could not find a better party than myself."

"I share my wife's opinion on this subject, monsieur."

"What! You wicked man! you, too!"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Pray consider that —"

"My wife has told you, sir. We made a marriage of

love, and, like her, I believe that love marriages are the only happy ones."

"To make merchandise of Antonine! I, counsel her to be guilty of an act of shocking meanness, a marriage of interest! to sell herself, in a word, when but an hour ago she confessed her pure and noble love to me! Ah, monsieur, I thought you had a higher opinion of me!"

"Come, come, now, my dear Dutertre, you are a man of sense, confess that these reasons are nothing but romance; help me to convince your wife."

"I repeat, monsieur, that I think as she does."

"Ah," exclaimed M. Pascal, "I did not expect to find here friends so cold and indifferent to what concerned me."

"Sir," exclaimed Sophie, "that reproach is unjust."

"Unjust! alas, I wish it were; but, indeed, I have too much reason to think differently. But a moment ago, your husband refused one of my requests, and now it is you. Ah, it is sad — sad. What can I rely upon after this?"

"Refused what?" said Sophie to her husband, more and more disquieted. "What does he mean, Charles?"

"It is not necessary to mention it, my dear Sophie."

"I think, on the contrary," replied Pascal, "that it would be well to tell your wife, my dear Dutertre, and have her opinion."

"Sir!" exclaimed Dutertre, clasping his hands in dismay.

"Come! is it not a marriage of love?" said Pascal, "you do not have any secrets from each other!"

"Charles, I beseech you, explain to me the meaning of all this. Ah, I saw plainly enough that you were suffering. Monsieur, has anything happened between you and Charles?" said she to Pascal, in a tone of entreaty. "I implore you to tell me."

"My God! a very simple thing happened. You can judge of it yourself, madame —"

"Monsieur!" cried Dutertre, "in the name of the gratitude we owe you, in the name of pity, not one word more, I beseech you, for I can never believe that you will persist in your resolution. And then, what good does it do to torture my wife with needless alarm?"

Then, turning to Madame Dutertre, he said:

"Compose yourself, Sophie, I beg you."

The father Dutertre, hearing the sound of voices as he sat in his chamber, suddenly opened his door, made two steps into the parlour, extending his hands before him, and cried, trembling with excitement:

"Charles! Sophie. My God! what is the matter?"

"My father!" whispered Dutertre, wholly overcome.

"The old man!" said Pascal. "Good! that suits me!"

CHAPTER IX.

A MOMENT'S silence followed the entrance of the old blind man into the parlour.

Dutertre went quickly to meet his father, took hold of his trembling hand, and said, as he pressed it tenderly:

"Calm yourself, father, it is nothing; a simple discussion, a little lively. Let me take you back to your chamber."

"Charles," said the old man, shaking his head sadly, "your hand is cold, you are nervous, your voice is changed; something has happened which you wish to hide from me."

"You are not mistaken, sir," said Pascal to the old man. "Your son is hiding something from you, and in his interest, in yours, and in the interest of your daughter-in-law and her children, you ought not to be ignorant of it."

"But M. Pascal, can nothing touch your heart?" cried Charles Dutertre. "Are you without pity, without compassion?"

"It is because I pity your obstinate folly, and that of your wife, my dear Dutertre, that I wish to appeal from it, to the good sense of your respectable father."

"Charles," cried Sophie, "however cruel the truth may be, tell it. This doubt, this agony, is beyond my endurance!"

"My son," added the old man, "be frank, as you have always been, and we will have courage."

"You see, my dear Dutertre," persisted M. Pascal, "your worthy father himself wishes to know the truth."

"Monsieur," answered Dutertre, in a broken voice, looking at Pascal with tears which he could hardly restrain, "be good, be generous, as you have been until to-day. Your power is immense, I know; with one word you can plunge us in distress, in disaster; but with one word, too, you can restore to us the peace and happiness which we have owed to you. I implore you, do not be pitiless."

At the sight of the tears, which, in spite of his efforts to control, rose to the eyes of Dutertre, a man so resolute and energetic, Sophie detected the greatness of the danger, and, turning to M. Pascal, said, in a heart-rending voice:

"My God! I do not know the danger with which you threaten us, but I am afraid, oh, I am afraid, and I implore you also, M. Pascal."

"After having been our saviour," cried Dutertre, drying the tears which escaped in spite of him, "surely you will not be our executioner!"

"Your executioner!" repeated Pascal. "Please God, my poor friends, it is not I, it is you who wish to be your own executioner. This word you expect from me, this word which can assure your happiness, say it, my dear Dutertre, and our little feast will be as joyous as it ought to be; if not, then do not complain of the bad fate which awaits you. Alas, you will have it so!"

"Charles, if it depends on you," cried Sophie, in a voice of agony, "if this word M. Pascal asks depends on you, then say it, oh, my God, since the salvation of your father and your children depend upon it."

"You hear your wife, my dear Dutertre," resumed Pascal. "Will you be insensible to her voice?"

"Ah, well, then," cried Dutertre, pale and desperate, "since this man is pitiless, you, my father, and you, too, Sophie, can know all. I dismissed Marcelange from my employ. M. Pascal has an interest, of which I am ignorant, in having this man enter the business house of

Durand, and he asks me to give to this firm a voucher for the integrity of a wretch whom I have thrown out of my establishment as an arrant impostor."

"Ah, monsieur," said the old man, shocked, as he turned to the side where he supposed M. Pascal to be, "that is impossible. You cannot expect such an unworthy action from my son!"

"And if I refuse to do this degrading thing," said Dutertre, "M. Pascal withdraws from me the capital which I have so rashly accepted, he refuses me credit, and in our present crisis that would be our loss, our ruin."

"Great God!" whispered Sophie, terrified.

"That is not all, father," continued Dutertre. "My wife, too, must pay her tribute of shame. M. Pascal is, he says, in love with Mlle. Antonine, and Sophie must serve this love, which she knows to be impossible, and which for honourable reasons she disapproves, or a threat is still suspended over our heads. Now you have the truth, father,—submit to a ruin as terrible as unforeseen, or commit a base action, such is the alternative to which a man whom we have trusted so long as loyal and generous reduces me."

"That again, always that; so goes the world," interposed M. Pascal, sighing and shrugging his shoulders. "So long as they can receive your aid without making any return, oh, then they flatter you and praise you. It is always 'My noble benefactor, my generous saviour;' they call you 'dear, good man,' load you with attentions; they embroider purses for you and make a feast for you. The little children repeat compliments to you, but let the day come when this poor, innocent man presumes in his turn to ask one or two miserable little favours, then they cry, 'Scoundrel!' 'Unworthy!' 'Infamous!'"

"Any sacrifice, compatible with honour, you might have asked of me, M. Pascal," said Dutertre, in a voice which told how deeply he was wounded, "and I would have made it with joy!"

"Then, what is to be expected?" continued Pascal, without replying to Dutertre, "if the 'good, innocent man,' so good-natured as they suppose him to be, the benefactor, at last, grows weary, ingratitude breaks his heart, for he is naturally sensitive, too sensitive?"

"Ingratitude!" cried Sophie, bursting into tears, "we — we — ingrates, oh, my God!"

"And as the 'good, innocent man' sees a little later that he has been mistaken," continued Pascal, without replying to Sophie, "as he recognises the fact, with pain, that he has been dealing with people incapable of putting their grateful friendship beyond a few puerile prejudices, he says to himself that he would be by far too much of an 'innocent man' to continue to open his purse for the use of such lukewarm friends. So he withdraws his money and his credit as I do, being brought to this resolution by certain circumstances consequent upon the refusal of this dear Dutertre, whom I loved so much, and whom I would love still to call my friend. One last word, sir," added Pascal, addressing the old man. "I have just told you frankly my attitude toward your son, and his toward me; but as it would cost my own heart too much to renounce the faith that I had in the affection of this dear Dutertre, as I know the terrible evils which, through his own fault, must come upon him and his family, I am willing still to give him one quarter of an hour for reconsideration. Let him give me the letter in question, let Madame Dutertre make me the promise that I ask of her, and all shall become again as in the past, and I shall ask for breakfast, and enthusiastically drink a toast to friendship. You are the father of Dutertre, monsieur, you have a great influence over him; judge and decide."

"Charles," said the old man to his son, in a voice full of emotion, "you have acted as an honest man. That is well, but there is still another thing to do; to refuse to vouch for the integrity of a scoundrel is not enough."

"Ah, ah!" interrupted Pascal, "what more, then, is there to do?"

"If M. Pascal," continued the old man, "persists in this dangerous design, you ought, my son, to write to the house of Durand, that for reasons of which you are ignorant, but which are perhaps hostile to their interests, M. Pascal desires to place this Marcelange with them, and that they must be on their guard, because to be silent when an unworthy project is proposed is to become an accomplice."

"I will follow your advice, father," replied Dutertre, in a firm voice.

"Better and better," exclaimed Pascal, sighing, "to ingratitude they add the odious abuse of confidence. Ah, well, I will drink the cup to the dregs. Only, my poor former friends," added he, throwing a strange and sinister glance upon the actors in this scene, "only I fear, you see, that after drinking it a great deal of bitterness and rancour will remain in my heart, and then, you know, when a legitimate hatred succeeds a tender friendship, this hatred, unhappily, becomes a terrible thing."

"Oh, Charles! he frightens me," whispered the young wife, drawing nearer her husband.

"As to you, my dear Sophie," added the old man, with imperturbable calmness, without replying to M. Pascal's threat, "you ought not only to favour in nothing — the course which you have taken — a marriage which you must disapprove, but if M. Pascal persists in his intentions, you ought, by all means, to enlighten Mlle. Antonine as to the character of the man who seeks her. To do that, you have only to inform her at what an infamous price he put the continuation of the aid he has rendered your husband."

"That is my duty," replied Sophie, in a calmer voice, "and I will do it, father."

"And you, too, my dear Madame Dutertre, to abuse an honest confidence!" said M. Pascal, hiding his anger

under a veil of sweetness, "to strike me in my dearest hope, ah, this is generous! God grant that I may not give myself up to cruel retaliation! After two years of friendship to part with such sentiments! But it must be, it must be!" added Pascal, looking alternately at Dutertre and his wife. "Is all ended between us?"

Sophie and her husband preserved a silence full of resignation and dignity.

"Oh, well," said Pascal, taking his hat, "another proof of the ingratitude of men, alas!"

"Monsieur," cried Dutertre, exasperated beyond measure at the affected sensibility of Pascal, "in the presence of the frightful blow with which you intend to crush us, this continued sarcasm is atrocious. Leave us, leave us!"

"Ah, here I am driven away from this house by people who are conscious of owing their happiness to me for so long a time, — their salvation even, they owe to me," said Pascal, walking slowly toward the door. "Driven away from here! I! Ah, this mortifying grief disappoints me, indeed!"

Then, pausing, he rummaged his pocket, and drew out the little purse that Sophie had given him a few moments before, and, handing it to the young wife, he said, with a pitiless accent of sardonic contrition:

"Happily, they are mute, or these pearls of steel would tell me every moment how much my name was blessed in this house from which I am driven away."

Then, with the air of changing his mind, he put the purse back in his pocket, after looking at it with a melancholy smile, and said:

"No, no, I will keep you, poor little innocent purse. You will recall to me the little good I have done, and the cruel deception which has been my reward."

So saying, M. Pascal put his hand on the knob of the door, opened it, and went out, while Sophie and her husband and her father sat in gloomy silence.

This oppressive silence was still unbroken when M.

Pascal, returning and opening the door half-way, said across the threshold:

"To tell the truth, Dutertre, I have reflected. Listen to me, my dear Dutertre."

A ray of foolish hope illumined the face of Dutertre; for a moment he believed that, in spite of the cold and sarcastic cruelty that Pascal had first affected, he did feel some pity at last.

Sophie shared the same hope; like her husband she listened with indescribable anguish to the words of the man who was to dispose so absolutely of their fate, while Pascal said:

"Next Saturday is your pay-day, is it not, my dear Dutertre? Let me call you so notwithstanding what has passed between us."

"Thank God, he has some pity," thought Dutertre, and he replied aloud:

"Yes, monsieur."

"I would not wish, you understand, my dear Dutertre," continued Pascal, "to put you in ruinous embarrassment. I know Paris, and in the present business crisis you could not get credit for a cent, especially if it were known that I have withdrawn mine from you, and as, after all, you relied upon my name to meet your liabilities, did you not?"

"Charles, we are saved!" whispered Sophie, panting, "he was only testing us."

Dutertre, struck with this idea, which appeared to him all the more probable as he had at first suspected it, no longer doubted his safety; his heart beat violently, his contracted features relaxed into their ordinary cheerful expression, and he replied, stammering from excess of emotion:

"In fact, sir, trusting blindly to your promises, I relied on your credit as usual."

"Well, my dear Dutertre, that you may not find yourself in an embarrassed position, I have come back to tell

you that, as you still have about a week, you had better provide for yourself elsewhere, as you cannot depend on Paris or on me."

And M. Pascal closed the door, and took his departure.

The reaction was so terrible that Dutertre fell back in his chair, pale, inanimate, and utterly exhausted. Hiding his face in his hands, he sobbed:

"Lost, lost!"

"Oh, our children!" cried Sophie, in a heartrending voice, as she threw herself down at her husband's knees, "our poor children!"

"Charles," said the old man, extending his hands, and timidly groping his way to his son, "Charles, my beloved son, have courage!"

"Oh, father, it is ruin, it is bankruptcy," said the unhappy man, with convulsive sobs. "The misery, oh, my God! the misery in store for us all!"

At the height of this overwhelming sorrow came a cruel contrast; the little children, clamorous with joy, rushed into the parlour, exclaiming:

"It is Madeleine; here is Madeleine!"

CHAPTER X.

At the sight of Madeleine, who was no other than the Marquise de Miranda, the happiness of Madame Dutertre was so great that for a moment all her sorrows and all her terrors for the future were forgotten; her sweet and gracious countenance beamed with joy, she could only pronounce these words in broken accents:

"Madeleine, dear Madeleine! after such a long absence, at last you have come!"

After the two young women had embraced each other Sophie said to her friend as she looked at her husband and the old man:

"Madeleine, my husband and his father, — our father, as he calls me his daughter."

The marquise, entering suddenly, had thrown herself upon Sophie's neck with such impetuous affection that Charles Dutertre could not distinguish the features of the stranger, but when, at Madame Dutertre's last words, the newly arrived friend turned toward him, he felt a sudden strange impression, — an impression so positive that, for a few minutes, he, like his wife, forgot the vindictive speech of M. Pascal.

What Charles Dutertre felt at the sight of Madeleine was a singular mixture of surprise, admiration, and almost distress, for he experienced a sort of indefinable remorse at the thought of being in that critical moment accessible to any emotion except that which pertained to the ruin which threatened him and his family.

The Marquise de Miranda would hardly, at first sight, seem capable of making so sudden and so deep an im-

pression. Quite tall in stature, her form and waist were completely hidden under a large mantle of spring material which matched that of her dress, whose long, trailing folds scarcely permitted a view of the extremity of her little boot. It was the same with her hands, which were almost entirely concealed by the sleeves of her dress, which she wore, as was her custom, long and floating. A little hood made of crape, as white as snow, formed a framework for her distinctly oval face, and set off the tint of her complexion, for Madeleine had that dull, pale flesh-colour so often found in brunettes of a pronounced type, with large, expressive blue eyes fringed with lashes as black as her eyebrows of jet, while, by a bewitching contrast, her hair, arranged in a mass of little curls, à la Sevigné, was of that charming and delicate ash-blonde which Rubens makes flow like waves upon the shoulders of his fair naiads.

This pallid complexion, these blue eyes, these black eyebrows and blonde hair, gave to Madeleine's physiognomy a very fetching attraction; her ebony lashes were so thick, so closely set, that one might have said — like the women of the East, who by this means impart a passionate and at the same time an enervated expression to their faces — she painted with black the under part of her eyelids, almost always partially closed over their large azure-coloured pupils; her pink nostrils, changing and nervous, dilated on each side of a Greek nose exquisite in its contour; while her lips, of so warm a red that one might almost see the blood circulate under their delicate epidermis, were full but clear cut, and a little prominent, like those of an antique Erigone, and sometimes under their bright coloured edges one could see the beautiful enamel of her teeth.

But why continue this portrait? Will there not be always, however faithful our description, however highly coloured it may be, as immeasurable a distance between that and the reality as exists between a painting and a

living being? It would be impossible to make perceptible that atmosphere of irresistible attraction, that magnetism, we might say, which emanated from this singular creature. That which in others would have produced a neutralising effect, seemed in her to increase her fascinations a hundredfold. The very length and amplitude of her garments, which, without revealing the contour of her figure, allowed only a sight of the end of her fingers and the extremity of her boot, added a charm to her. In a word, if the chaste drapery which falls at the feet of an antique muse, of severe and thoughtful face, enhances the dignity of her aspect, a veil thrown over the beautiful form of the Venus Aphrodite only serves to excite and inflame the imagination.

Such was the impression which Madeleine had produced on Charles Dutertre, who, speechless and troubled, stood for some moments gazing at her.

Sophie, not suspecting the cause of her husband's silence and emotion, supposed him to be absorbed in thought of the imminent danger which threatened him, and this idea bringing her back to the position she had for a moment forgotten, she said to the marquise, trying to force a smile:

"My dear Madeleine, you must excuse the preoccupation of Charles. At the moment you entered we were talking of business, and business of a very serious nature indeed."

"Yes, really, madame, you must excuse me," said Dutertre, starting, and reproaching himself for the strange impression his wife's friend had made upon him. "Fortunately, all that Sophie has told me of your kindness encourages me to presume upon your indulgence."

"My indulgence? It is I who have need of yours, monsieur," replied the marquise, smiling, "for in my overmastering desire to see my dear Sophie again, running here unawares, I threw myself on her neck, without dreaming of your presence or that of your father. But

he will, I know, pardon me for treating Sophie like a sister, since he treats her as a daughter."

With these words, Madeleine turned to the old man.

"Alas! madame," exclaimed he, involuntarily, "never did my poor children have greater need of the fidelity of their friends. Perhaps it is Heaven that sends you —"

"Take care, father," said Dutertre, in a low voice to the old man, as if he would reproach him tenderly for making a stranger acquainted with their domestic troubles, for Madeleine had suddenly directed a surprised and interrogative glance toward Sophie.

The old man comprehended his son's thought, and whispered:

"You are right. I ought to keep silent, but grief is so indiscreet! Come now, Charles, take me back to my room. I feel very much overcome."

And he took his son's arm. As Dutertre was about to leave the parlour the marquise approached him, and said:

"I shall see you soon, M. Dutertre, I warn you, for I am resolved during my sojourn in Paris to come often, oh! very often, to see my dear Sophie. Besides, I wish to make a request of you, and, in order to be certain of your consent, I shall charge Sophie to ask it. You see, I act without ceremony, as a friend, an old friend, for my friendship for you, M. Dutertre, dates from the happiness Sophie owes you. I shall see you, then, soon!" added the marquise, extending her hand to Dutertre with gracious cordiality.

For the first time in his life Sophie's husband felt ashamed of the hands blackened by toil; he hardly dared touch the rosy little fingers of Madeleine; he trembled slightly at the contact; a burning blush mounted to his forehead, and, to dissimulate his mortification and embarrassment, he bowed profoundly before the marquise, and went out with his father.

From the commencement of this scene Sophie's two

little children, holding each other's hands, and hiding now and then behind their mother, near whom they were standing, opened their eyes wide in silent and curious contemplation of the great lady.

The marquise, perceiving them, exclaimed, as she looked at her friend:

"Your children? My God, how pretty they are! How proud you must be!" And she dropped on her knees before them, putting herself, so to speak, on a level with them; then, dispersing with one hand the blond curls which hid the brow and eyes of the little girl, she lifted the chin of the child's half-bent head with the other hand, looked a moment at the charming little face so rosy and fresh, and kissed the cheeks and eyes and brow and hair and neck of the little one with maternal tenderness.

"And you, little cherub, you must not be jealous," added she, and, holding the brown head of the little boy and the blond curls of the little girl together, she divided her caresses between them.

Sophie Dutertre, moved to tears, smiled sadly at this picture, when the marquise, still on her knees, looked up at her and said, holding both children in her embrace:

"You would not believe, Sophie, that, in embracing these little angels, I comprehend, I feel almost the happiness that you experience when you devour them with kisses and caresses, and it seems to me that I love you even more to know that you are so happy, so perfectly happy."

As she heard her happiness thus extolled, Sophie, brought back to the painful present a moment forgotten, dropped her head, turned pale, and showed in her countenance such intense agony, that Madeleine rose immediately, and exclaimed:

"My God, Sophie, how pale you are! What is the matter?"

Madame Dutertre stifled a sigh, lifted her head sadly, and replied:

"Nothing is the matter, Madeleine; the excitement, the joy of seeing you again after such a long separation, — that is all."

"Excitement, joy?" answered the marquise, with an air of painful doubt. "No, no! A few moments ago it was excitement and joy, but now you seem to be heart-broken, Sophie."

Madame Dutertre said nothing, hid her tears, embraced her children, and then whispered to them:

"Go find your nurse, my darlings."

Madeleine and Augustus obeyed and left the parlour, not, however, without turning many times to look at the great lady whom they thought so charming.

CHAPTER XI.

SCARCELY were the two children out of the parlour, when Madeleine said to her friend, quickly:

"Now we are alone, Sophie, I pray you, answer me; what is the matter with you? What is the cause of this sudden oppression? Have absence and distance destroyed your confidence in me?"

Sophie had courage enough to overcome her feelings, and hide without falsehood the painful secret which was not hers. Not daring to confess, even to her best friend, the probable and approaching ruin of Dutertre, she said to Madeleine, with apparent calmness:

"If I must tell you my weakness, my friend, I share sometimes, and doubtless exaggerate, the financial troubles of my husband in this crisis, — temporary they may be, but at the same time very dangerous to our industry," said Sophie, trying to smile.

"But this crisis, my dear Sophie, is, as you say, only temporary, is it not? It is not yet grave and should it become so, what can be done to render it less painful to you and your husband? Without being very rich I live in perfect ease, — is there anything I would not do?"

"Good, dear, excellent friend!" said Sophie, interrupting Madeleine, with emotion, "always the same heart! Reassure yourself, — this time of crisis will, I hope, be only a passing evil, — let us talk no more about it, let me have all the joy of seeing you again."

"But, Sophie, if these troubles —"

"Madeleine," replied Sophie, sweetly, interrupting her friend again, "first, let us talk of yourself."

"Egoist!"

"That is true, when it touches you; but tell me, you are happy, are you not? because, marquise as you are, you have made a marriage of love, have you not? And what about your husband?"

"I am a widow."

"Oh, my God, already!"

"I was a widow the evening of my wedding, my dear Sophie."

"What do you mean?"

"As extraordinary as it may seem, it is nevertheless quite simple. Listen to me: when I left boarding-school and returned to Mexico, where I was ordered, as you know, by my father, I found but one relative of my mother, the Marquis de Miranda, mortally attacked by one of those epidemics which so often ravage Lima. He had no children and had seen me when I was a small child. He knew that my father's fortune had been entirely destroyed by disastrous lawsuits. He had a paternal sentiment for me, and almost on his death-bed offered me his hand. 'Accept, my dear Magdelena, my poor orphan,' said he to me, 'my name will give you a social position, my fortune will assure your independence, and I shall die content in knowing that you are happy.'"

"Noble heart!" said Sophie.

"Yes," replied Madeleine, with emotion, "he was the best of men. My isolated position and earnest entreaties made me accept his generous offer. The priest came to his bedside to consecrate our union, and the ceremony was hardly over when the hand of the Marquis de Miranda was like ice in my own."

"Madeleine, forgive me," said Madame Dutertre, involuntarily, "I have made you sad by recalling such painful memories."

"Painful? no, it is with a sweet melancholy that I think of Marquis de Miranda. It is only ingratitude that is bitter to the heart."

"And so young still, does not your liberty incommode you? Alone, without family, are you accustomed to this life of isolation?"

"I think I am the happiest of women, after you, let it be understood," replied Madeleine, smiling.

"And do you never think of marrying again, or rather," added Sophie, smiling in her turn, "of marrying? Because, really, notwithstanding your widowhood, you are a maiden."

"I hide nothing from you, Sophie. Ah, well, yes. One time I had a desire to marry, — that was a grand passion, a romance," replied Madeleine, gaily.

"Well, as you are free, who prevented this marriage?"

"Alas! I saw my hero for five minutes only, and from my balcony."

"Only five minutes?"

"Not more."

"And you loved him at once?"

"Passionately."

"And you have never seen him since?"

"Never! No doubt he has been translated to heaven among his brothers, the archangels, whose ideal beauty he possessed."

"Madeleine, are you speaking seriously?"

"Listen: six months ago I was in Vienna. I lived in the country situated near one of the suburbs of the city. One morning I was in a kiosk, the window of which looked out upon a field. Suddenly my attention was attracted by the noise of stamping and the clash of swords. I ran to my window; it was a duel."

"Oh, my God!"

"A young man of nineteen or twenty at most, as gracious and beautiful as they paint the angels, was fighting with a sort of giant with a ferocious face. My first wish was that the blond archangel — for blond is my passion — might triumph over the horrible demon, and although the combat lasted in my presence not more than two

minutes, I had time to admire the intrepidity, the calmness, and dexterity of my hero, — his white breast half naked, his long, blond hair floating to the wind, his brow serene, his eyes brilliant, and a smile upon his lips, he seemed to brave danger with a charming grace, and at that moment, I confess it, his beauty appeared to me more than human. Suddenly, in the midst of a kind of fascination that the flashing of the swords had for me, I saw the giant stagger and fall. Immediately my beautiful hero threw away his sword, clasped his hands, and, falling on his knees before his adversary, lifted to heaven his enchanting face, where shone an expression so touching, so ingenuous, that to see him thus bending in grief over his vanquished enemy, one would have thought of a young girl's grief for her wounded dove, if we can compare this hideous giant to a dove. But his wound did not seem to be mortal, for he sat up, and, in a hoarse voice, which I could hear through my window-blind, said to his young enemy:

"'On my knees, monsieur, I ask your pardon for my disloyal conduct and my rude provocation; if you had killed me it would have been justice.'

"Immediately a carriage arrived and carried the wounded man away, and a few minutes afterward all the witnesses of the duel had disappeared. It happened so rapidly that I would have thought I had dreamed it, but for the remembrance of my hero, who has been in my thought always since that day, the ideal of all that is most beautiful, most brave, and most generous."

"Now, Madeleine, I conceive that under such circumstances one might, in five minutes, feel a profound impression, perhaps ineffaceable. But have you never seen your hero again?"

"Never, I tell you. I do not know his name even; yet, if I marry, I should marry no man except him."

"Madeleine, you know that our old friendship gives me the privilege of being frank with you."

"Could you be otherwise?"

"It seems to me that you bear this grand passion very cheerfully."

"Why should I be sad?"

"But when one loves passionately, nothing is more cruel than absence and separation, and, above all, the fear of never seeing the beloved object again."

"That is true; and notwithstanding the effects of this profound passion, I declare to you they have a very different result with me."

"What must I say to you? When I began to love Charles, I should have died of distress if I had been separated from him."

"That is singular. My passion, I repeat to you, manifests itself in an entirely different fashion. There is not a day in which I do not think of my hero, my ideal; not a day in which I do not recall with love, in the smallest details, the only circumstances under which I saw him; not a day in which I do not turn all my thought to him; not a day in which I do not triumph with pride in comparing him to others, for he is the most beautiful of the most beautiful, most generous of the most generous; in fact, thanks to him, not a day in which I do not lull myself in the most beautiful dreams. Yes, it seems to me that my soul is for ever attached to his by cords as mysterious as they are indissoluble. I do not know if I shall ever behold him again, and yet I feel in my heart only delight and cheerfulness."

"I must say, as you do, my dear Madeleine, that it is very singular."

"Come, Sophie, let us talk sincerely; we are alone and, among women, although I am still a young lady to be married or a marriageable girl, we can say the truth. You find my love, do you not, a little platonic?

You are astonished to see me so careless or ignorant of the thrill you felt, when for the first time the hand of Charles pressed your hand in love?"

"Come, Madeleine, you are getting silly."

"Be frank, I have guessed your feeling."

"A little, but less than you think."

"That little suffices to penetrate your inmost thought, Madame Materialist."

"I say again, Madeleine, you are growing silly."

"Oh, oh, not so silly!"

Then, after a moment's silence, the marquise resumed, with a smile:

"If you only knew, Sophie, the strange, extraordinary, I might say incomprehensible things that have come in my life! What extravagant adventures have happened to me since our separation! My physician and my friend, the celebrated Doctor Gasterini, a great philosopher as well, has told me a hundred times there is not a creature in the world as singularly endowed as myself."

"Explain your meaning."

"Later, perhaps."

"Why not now?"

"If I had a sorrow to reveal, do you think I would hesitate? But, notwithstanding all that has been extraordinary in my life, or perhaps for that particular reason, I have been the happiest of women. Oh, my God! wait, for this moment I have almost a sorrow for my want of heart and memory."

"A want of memory?"

"Yes, of Antonine; have I not forgotten her since I have been here, talking to you only of myself? Is it wicked? Is it ingratitude enough?"

"I would be at least as culpable as you, but we need not reproach ourselves. This morning she came to bring me your letter and announce your arrival to me. Think of her joy, for she has, you can believe me, the strongest and most tender attachment to you."

"Poor child, how natural and charming she was! But tell me, has she fulfilled the promise of her childhood? She ought to be as pretty as an angel, with her fifteen years just in flower."

"You are right; she is a rosebud of freshness; add to that the finest, most delicate features that you could ever see. After the death of her nearest relative, she came, as you know, to live with her uncle, President Hubert, who has always been kind to her. Unhappily, he is now seriously ill, and should she lose him she would be compelled to go and live with some distant relatives, and the thought makes her very sad. Besides, you will see her and she will give you her confidence. She has made one to me, in order to ask my advice, for the circumstances are very grave."

"What is this confidence?"

"'If you see Madeleine before I do,' said Antonine to me, 'tell her nothing, my dear Sophie. I wish to confide all to her myself; it is a right which her affection for me gives me. I have other reasons, too, for laying this injunction on you.' So you see, my dear friend, I am obliged, perforce, to be discreet."

"I do not insist upon knowing more. To-day or to-morrow I will go to see this dear child," said the marquise, rising to take leave of Madame Dutertre.

"You leave me so soon, Madeleine?"

"Unfortunately, I must. I have an appointment from three to four, at the house of the Mexican envoy, my compatriot. He is going to conduct me to-morrow to the palace of a foreign Royal Highness. You see, Sophie, I am among the grandees."

"A Highness?"

"Such a Highness that, like all princes who belong to the reigning foreign families, he resides in the Élysée-Bourbon during his sojourn in Paris."

Madame Dutertre could not restrain a movement of surprise, and said, after a minute's reflection:

"That is singular."

"What, pray?"

"Antonine lives in a house contiguous to the Élysée. There is nothing very surprising in that, but—"

"But what?"

"I cannot tell you more, Madeleine; when you have heard Antonine's confidences you will comprehend why I have been struck with this coincidence."

"What is there in common with Antonine and the Élysée?"

"I tell you again, my dear friend, wait for the confidences of Antonine."

"So be it, my mysterious friend. Besides, I did not know she lived near the palace. I addressed a letter to her at her old dwelling-house. That suits my plans marvellously; I will go to see her before or after my audience with the prince."

"Come, what a great lady you are!"

"Pity me, rather, my dear Sophie, because it is a question of entreaty, not for myself, I am not in the habit of begging, but it concerns an important service to be done for a proscribed family, and one worthy of the highest interest. The mission is very difficult, very delicate; however, I consented to undertake it at the time of my departure from Venice, and I desire to try everything which can further my success."

"And surely you will succeed. Can any one refuse you anything? Do you remember when we were at school, as soon as a petition was to be addressed to our mistress you were always chosen as ambassadress; and they were right, for, really, you seem to possess a talisman for obtaining all you want."

"I assure you, my good Sophie," replied Madeleine, smiling in spite of herself, "I assure you I am often a magician without trying to be one. My God!" added the marquise, laughing, "how many fine extravagances I have to tell you. But we will see, some other

time. Come, dear Sophie, good-bye, — will see you soon."

"Oh, yes, come again soon, I implore you!"

"My God! you can count on my coming almost every day, because I am a bird of passage, and I have decided to employ my time in Paris well, that is to say, I shall see you very often."

"What! you are not thinking of leaving Paris soon?"

"I do not know; that will depend upon the inspiration that my hero, my passion, my ideal will give me, for I decide on nothing without consulting him in thought. But, as he always inspires me admirably, I doubt not he will induce me to stay near you as long a time as possible."

"Ah, my God, Madeleine; but, now I think of it, you told my husband that you had a favour to ask of him."

"That is true, I forgot it. It is a very simple thing. I understand nothing of money affairs. I learned that recently, to my cost, in Germany. I had a letter of credit on a certain Aloysius Schmidt, of Vienna; he cheated me shamefully, so I promised myself to be on my guard in the future. So I have taken another letter of credit on Paris. I wish to ask your husband to demand money for me when I have need of it. He will watch over my interests, and, thanks to him, I shall not be exposed to the possibility of falling into the clutches of a new Aloysius Schmidt."

"Nothing easier, my dear Madeleine. Charles will endorse your letter of credit and verify at hand all your accounts."

"That will be all the more necessary, since, between us, I am told that the person on whom they have given me this letter of credit is enormously rich, and as solvent as one could be, but crafty and sordid to the last degree."

"You do well to inform me beforehand. Charles will redouble his watchfulness."

"Besides, your husband, who is in business, ought to know the man of whom I speak, — they say he is one of the greatest capitalists in France."

"What is his name?"

"M. Pascal."

"M. Pascal?" repeated Madame Dutertre.

And she could not help trembling and turning pale.

The marquise, seeing her friend's emotion, said, quickly:

"Sophie, pray, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing, I assure you."

"I see that something is the matter; answer me, I implore you."

"Ah, well, if I must tell you, my husband has had some business relations with M. Pascal. Unhappily, a great misunderstanding was the result, and —"

"Why, Sophie, you are very unreasonable to give yourself so much concern, because, in consequence of this misunderstanding with M. Pascal, your husband cannot render me the good office I expected from him."

Madame Dutertre, willing to leave her friend in this error, tried to regain her calmness, and said to her:

"Indeed, it disappoints me very much to think that Charles will not be able to do you the first service that you ask of us."

"Stop, Sophie, you will make me regret having appealed so cordially to you."

"Madeleine —"

"Really, it is not such a great pity! And, besides, to prevent my being deceived, I will address myself directly to this M. Pascal, but I will demand my accounts every week. Your husband can examine them, and, if they are not correct, I will know perfectly well how to complain of them to monsieur, my banker, and to take another."

"You are right, Madeleine," said Sophie, recovering by degrees her self-possession, "and the supervision of

my husband will, in fact, be more necessary than you think."

"So this M. Pascal is a sordid fellow?"

"Madeleine," said Madame Dutertre, unable longer to conquer her emotion, "I beseech you, and let me speak to you as a friend, as a sister, whatever may be the reason, whatever may be the pretext, place no dependence in M. Pascal!"

"What do you mean, Sophie?"

"In a word, if he offers you his services, refuse them."

"His services? But I have no service to ask of him. I have a letter of credit on him. I will go and draw money from his bank when I have need of it — that is all."

"That may be, but you might, through mistake or ignorance of business, exceed your credit, and then —"

"Well, what then?"

"I know from a person who has told Charles and myself that, once M. Pascal has you in his debt, he will abuse his power cruelly, oh, so cruelly."

"Come, my good Sophie, I see that you take me for a giddy prodigal. Reassure yourself, and admire my economy. I have so much order that I lay by every year something from my income, and although these savings are small I place them at your disposal."

"Dear, tender friend, I thank you a thousand times! I repeat, the crisis which gives my husband and myself so much concern will soon end; but let me tell you again, do not trust M. Pascal. When you have seen Antonine, I will tell you more."

"Antonine again! You just spoke of her in connection with the Élysée."

"Yes, it all hangs together; you will see it yourself after to-morrow. I will explain myself entirely, which will be important to Antonine."

"After to-morrow, then, my dear Sophie. I must confess you excite my curiosity very much, and I try

in vain to discover what there can be in common between Antonine and the Élysée, or between Antonine and that wicked man, for so at least he appears who is named M. Pascal."

Half-past three sounded from the factory clock.

"My God! how late I am!" said Madeleine to her friend. "I shall barely have time, but I must embrace your angelic children before I go."

The two women left the parlour.

We will return with the reader to the Élysée-Bourbon, where we left the archduke alone, after the departure of M. Pascal.

CHAPTER XII.

THE archduke, anxious and preoccupied, was walking back and forth in his study, while his secretary of ordinance unsealed and examined the letters received during the day.

"This despatch, monseigneur," pursued the secretary, "relates to Colonel Pernetti, exiled with his family to England. We think it necessary to put your Highness on guard against the proceedings and petitions of the friends of Colonel Pernetti."

"I do not need that warning. The republican principles of this man are too dangerous for me to listen, under any consideration, to what may be urged in his favour. Go on."

"His Eminence, the envoy plenipotentiary from the Mexican Republic, asks the favour of presenting one of his compatriots to your Highness. It concerns a very urgent interest, and he requests your Highness to have the kindness to grant an audience to-morrow."

"Is the list of audiences complete for to-morrow?"

"No, monseigneur."

"Write that at two o'clock, to-morrow, I will receive the envoy from Mexico, and his compatriot?"

The secretary wrote.

A moment passed, and the archduke said to him:

"Does he mention in this letter the name of the person whom he wishes to present?"

"No, monseigneur."

"That is contrary to all custom; I shall not grant the audience."

The secretary put the letter he had begun to write aside, and took another sheet of paper.

In the meanwhile the prince changed his mind after reflection, and said:

"I will grant the audience."

The secretary bowed his head in assent, and, taking another letter, he rose and presented it to the prince without breaking the seal, and said:

"On this envelope is written 'Confidential and Special,' monseigneur."

The archduke took the letter and read it. It was from M. Pascal, and was expressed in these familiar words:

"After mature reflection, monseigneur, instead of waiting upon you Thursday I will see you to-morrow at three o'clock; it will depend upon you absolutely whether our business is concluded and signed during that interview. Your devoted

"PASCAL."

One moment of lively hope, soon tempered by the recollection of the eccentricities of M. Pascal's character, thrilled the prince, who, however, said, coldly:

"Write M. Pascal on the list of audiences for to-morrow at three o'clock."

An aide-de-camp was then presented, who asked if the prince could receive Count Frantz de Neuberg.

"Certainly," said the archduke.

After a few more moments' work with his secretary of ordinance, he gave the order to introduce Frantz.

Frantz presented himself, blushing, before the prince, his godfather, for the young count was excessively timid, and unsophisticated to a degree that would make our experienced lads of twenty laugh. Brought up by a Protestant pastor in the depth of a German village belonging to one of the numerous possessions of the arch-

duke, the godson of the Royal Highness had left this austere solitude, only to enter at sixteen years a military school devoted to the nobility, and kept with puritanical strictness. From that school, he went, by order of the prince, to serve in the Russian army as a volunteer in the wars of the Caucasus. The rude discipline of the camp; the severity of manners which characterised the old general to whom he had been sent and especially recommended by his royal godfather; the chain of sad and serious thought peculiar to brave but tender and melancholy souls; the sight of the fields of battle during a bitter war which knew no mercy nor pity; the habitual gravity of mind imparted to these same souls by the possibility if not the expectation of death, coolly braved every day in the midst of the most frightful perils; the mystery of his birth, to which was joined the pain of never having known the caresses of a father or a mother, —all had conspired to accentuate the natural reserve and timidity of his character, and increase the ingenuousness of his sincere and loving heart. In Frantz, as in many others, heroic courage was united with extreme and unconquerable timidity in the ordinary relations of life.

Besides, whether from prudence, or other reason, the prince, during the six months passed in Germany after the young man had returned from the war, had kept his godson far from the court. This determination agreed marvellously with the simple and studious habits of Frantz, who found the highest happiness in an obscure and tranquil life. As to the sentiments he felt for the prince, his godfather, he was full of gratitude, loyalty, and respectful affection, the expression of which was greatly restrained by the imposing prestige of his royal protector's rank.

The embarrassment of Frantz was so painful, when, after the departure of the secretary, he stood in the presence of his godfather, that for some time he remained silent, his eyes cast down.

Fortunately, at the sight of the young man, the prince appeared to forget his laborious duties; his cold and haughty face relaxed, his brow grew clearer, a smile parted his lips, and he said, affectionately, to Frantz:

"Good morning, my child."

And taking the young man's blond head in his two hands, he kissed him tenderly on the forehead; then he added, as if he felt the need of opening his heart:

"I am glad to see you, Frantz. I have been overwhelmed with business, sad business, this morning. Here, give me your arm and let us take a turn together in the garden."

Frantz opened one of the glass doors which led to the steps opposite the lawn, and the godfather and godson, arm in arm, took their way to the shady walk in which the young man had promenaded so long that morning.

"Now, what is the matter, my child?" said the prince, observing at once the embarrassment of the young man.

"Monseigneur," replied Frantz, with increasing bashfulness, "I have a confidence to make to your Royal Highness."

"A confidence!" repeated the prince, smiling. "Let us hear, then, the confidence of Count Frantz."

"It is a very important confidence, monseigneur."

"Well, what is this important confidence?"

"Monseigneur, I have no parents. Your Royal Highness has, up to this time, deigned to stand for me in the place of family."

"And you have bravely repaid my care, and fulfilled my hopes, my dear Frantz; you have even surpassed them. Modest, studious, and courageous, although a lad, three years ago, you fought with such intelligence and intrepidity in that terrible war to which I sent you for your first experience. You have received there your first wound, your baptism of fire. I will not speak of a duel, which I ought to ignore, but in which you have,

I know, given proof of as much bravery as generosity."

"Monseigneur —"

"I pray you, let me in this moment recall all your claims to my tenderness. It does me good, it makes me forget the bitter vexations of which you are the innocent and involuntary cause."

"I, monseigneur?"

"You, because, if you continue to fill me with satisfaction, you cannot foresee the future which my loving ambition prepares for you, — the unhoped-for position which perhaps awaits you."

"You know, monseigneur, the simplicity of my tastes, and —"

"My dear Frantz," interrupted the prince, "this simplicity, this modesty, are virtues under certain conditions, while under other circumstances these virtues become weakness and indolence. But we are getting far away from the confidence. Come, what is it you have to tell me?"

"Monseigneur —"

"Well, speak; are you afraid of me? Is there a single thought in your heart which you cannot confess with a bold face and steady eye?"

"No, monseigneur; so, without any evasion, I will tell your Highness that I wish to get married."

If a thunderbolt had fallen at the feet of the prince he could not have been more astounded than he was at the words of Frantz; he rudely withdrew his arm from that of the young man, stepped back, and exclaimed:

"You marry, Frantz?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Why, you are a fool."

"Monseigneur!"

"You marry, and hardly twenty years old! You marry! When I was planning for you to —"

Then the prince, regaining his self-possession, said, calmly and coldly:

"And whom do you wish to marry, Frantz?"

"Mlle. Antonine Hubert, monseigneur."

"Who is this Mlle. Hubert? What did you say her name was?"

"Hubert, monseigneur."

"And what is Mlle. Hubert?"

"The niece of a French magistrate, monseigneur, President Hubert."

"And where have you made the acquaintance of this young lady?"

"Here, monseigneur."

"Here? I have never received any person of that name."

"When I say here, monseigneur, I mean to say in this walk where we are."

"Speak more clearly."

"Your Royal Highness sees this wall of protection which separates the neighbouring garden?"

"Yes, go on."

"I was promenading in this walk when I saw Mlle. Antonine for the first time."

"In this garden?" replied the prince, advancing to the wall, and taking a view of it. Then he added:

"This young lady, then, lives in the next house?"

"Yes, monseigneur; her uncle occupies a part of the ground floor."

"Very well."

After a few minutes' reflection, the prince added, severely:

"You have given me your confidence, Frantz. I accept it; but act with perfect candour, with the most thorough sincerity, if you do not—"

"Monseigneur!" interrupted Frantz, in painful surprise.

"Well, well, I was wrong to suspect your truthfulness,

Frantz. You have never lied to me in your life. Speak, I will listen to you."

"Your Royal Highness knows that, since our arrival in Paris, I have rarely gone out in the evening."

"That is true; I am aware of your disinclination to society, and, too, of your excessive timidity, which increases your distaste for appearing at these dreaded French functions, where you are naturally a stranger. I have not insisted upon it, Frantz, and have allowed you to dispose of most of your evenings as you pleased."

"In one of these evenings, monseigneur, six weeks ago, I saw Mlle. Antonine for the first time. She was watering flowers; I was leaning on my elbow there at the wall. She saw me; I saluted her. She returned my salutation, blushed, and continued to water her flowers; twice she looked up at me, and we bowed to each other again; then, as it grew dark entirely, Mlle. Antonine left the garden."

It is impossible to reproduce the ingenuous grace with which poor Frantz made this artless recital of his first interview with the young girl. The emotion betrayed by his voice, the heightened colour of his face, all proved the honesty of this pure and innocent soul.

"One question, Frantz," said the prince. "Has this young lady a mother?".

"No, monseigneur, Mlle. Antonine lost her mother when she was in the cradle, and her father died some years ago."

"Is her uncle, President Hubert, married?"

"No, monseigneur."

"How old is she?"

"Fifteen years and a half, monseigneur."

"And is she pretty?"

"Antonine! monseigneur!"

In this exclamation of Frantz, there was almost a reproach, as if it were possible for him not to recognise the beauty of Mlle. Antonine.

"I ask you, Frantz," repeated the archduke, "if this young girl is pretty?"

"Monseigneur, do you recollect the sleeping Hebe in the gallery of your palace of Offenbach?"

"One of my finest Correggios."

"Monseigneur, Mlle. Antonine resembles this painting by Correggio, although she is far more beautiful."

"It would be difficult to be that."

"Monseigneur knows that I always speak the truth," replied Frantz, ingenuously.

"Well, go on with your story."

"I cannot tell you, monseigneur, what I felt when returning to my chamber. I thought of Mlle. Antonine. I was agitated, troubled, and happy at the same time. I did not sleep all night. The moon rose; I opened my window, and remained on my balcony until day, looking at the tops of the trees in Mlle. Antonine's garden. Oh, monseigneur, how long the hours of the next day seemed to me! Before sunset, I was there again at the wall. At last mademoiselle came again to water her flowers. Every moment, thinking she had already seen me, I prepared to salute her, but I do not know how it happened, she did not see me. She came, however, to water flowers close to the wall where I was standing. I wanted to cough lightly to attract her attention, but I dared not. Night came on, my heart was broken, monseigneur, for still mademoiselle had not seen me. Finally, she returned to the house, after setting her little watering-pot near the fountain. Fortunately, thinking, no doubt, that it was out of place there, she returned, and set it on a bench near the wall. Then by chance, turning her eyes toward me, she discovered me at last. We saluted each other at the same time, monseigneur, and she went back into the house quickly. I then gathered some beautiful roses, and, trying to be very dexterous, although my heart was beating violently, I had the good luck to let the bouquet fall in the mouth

of the watering-pot that mademoiselle had left there. When I returned to my room, I trembled to think what would be the thought of the young lady when she found these flowers. I was so uneasy, that I had a great mind to descend again and jump over the little wall and take the bouquet away. I do know what restrained me. Perhaps I hoped that Mlle. Antonine would not take offence at it. What a night I passed, monseigneur! The next day I ran to the wall; the watering-pot and the bouquet were there on the bench, but I waited in vain for Mlle. Antonine. She did not come that evening or the next day to look after her flowers. I cannot describe to you, monseigneur, the sadness and the anguish I endured those three days and nights, and you would have discovered my grief if you had not taken your departure just at that time."

"For the journey to Fontainebleau, you mean?"

"Yes, monseigneur. But, pardon me; perhaps I am abusing the patience of your Royal Highness?"

"No, no, Frantz, continue; on the contrary, I insist upon knowing all. I pray you, continue your story with the same sincerity."

CHAPTER XIII.

At the invitation of the archduke, Frantz de Neuberg continued his recital with charming frankness:

"For three days Mlle. Antonine did not appear, monseigneur. Overwhelmed with sadness, and hoping nothing, I went, nevertheless, at the accustomed hour to the garden. What was my surprise, my joy, monseigneur, when, arriving near the wall, I saw just below me Mlle. Antonine, seated on the bench! She held in her hand, lying on her lap, my bouquet of roses, faded a long time; her head was bent over; I could only see her neck and the edge of her hair; she did not suspect I was there; I remained motionless, hardly daring to breathe, for fear I might drive her away by revealing my presence. Finally I grew bolder, and I said, trembling, for it was the first time I had spoken to her, 'Good evening, mademoiselle.' She trembled so that the faded bouquet fell out of her lap. She did not notice it, and, without changing her attitude or lifting her head, she replied, in a low voice, as agitated as my own, 'Good evening, monsieur.' Seeing I was so well received, I added: 'You have not come to water your flowers for three days, mademoiselle.' 'That is true, monsieur,' answered she, in a broken voice, 'I have been a little sick.' 'Oh, my God!' I exclaimed, with such evident distress that mademoiselle raised her head a moment and looked at me. I saw, alas! that she was, monseigneur, really very pale, but she soon resumed her first attitude, and again I saw only her neck, which seemed to me to be slightly blushing: 'And now, mademoiselle,

you are better?' 'Yes, monsieur,' said she. Then, after a short silence, I added: 'You will then be able to water your flowers every evening as you have done in the past.' 'I do not know, monsieur, I hope so.' 'And do you not feel afraid the fresh evening air will be injurious to you, after having been sick, mademoiselle?' 'You are right, monsieur,' replied she, 'I thank you, I am going back into the house.' And really, monseigneur, it had rained all the morning and it was growing very cold. The moment she left the bench I said to her: 'Mademoiselle, will you give me this faded bouquet which has fallen at your feet?' She picked it up and handed it to me in silence, without lifting her head or looking at me. I took it as a treasure, monseigneur, and soon Mlle. Antonine disappeared in a turn of the garden walk."

The prince listened to his godson with profound attention. The frankness of this recital proved its sincerity. Until then, his only thought was that Frantz had been the sport of one of those Parisian coquettes, so dangerous to strangers, or the dupe of an adventurous and designing girl; but now a graver fear assailed him: a love like this, so chaste and pure, would, for reason of its purity, which banished all remorse from the minds of these two children, — one fifteen and a half and the other twenty, — become profoundly rooted in their hearts.

Frantz, seeing the countenance of the prince grow more and more gloomy, and meeting his glance, which had regained its usual haughty coldness, stopped, utterly confounded.

"So," said the archduke, sarcastically, when his godson discontinued his story, "you wish to marry a young girl to whom you have addressed three or four words, and whose rare beauty, as you say, has turned your head."

"I hope to obtain the consent of your Royal Highness to marry Mlle. Antonine, because I love her, mon-

seigneur, and it is impossible for our marriage to be postponed."

At these words, so resolutely uttered in spite of the timidity of Frantz, the prince trembled and reproached himself for having believed it to be one of those chaste loves of such proverbial purity.

"And why, sir," said the prince, in a threatening voice, "why cannot this marriage be postponed?"

"Because I am a man of honour, monseigneur."

"A man of honour! You are either a dishonest man, sir, or a dupe."

"Monseigneur!"

"You have basely abused the innocence of a child of fifteen years, I tell you, or you are her dupe. Parisian girls are precocious in the art of cheating husbands."

Frantz looked at the prince a moment in silence, but without anger or confusion, vainly trying to ascertain the meaning of these words which touched him neither in his love nor in his honour.

"Excuse me, monseigneur, I do not understand you."

Frantz uttered these words with such an expression of sincerity, with such ingenuous assurance, that the prince, more and more astonished, added, after a moment's silence, looking at the young man with a penetrating gaze:

"Did you not just tell me that your marriage with this young lady could not be deferred?"

"No, monseigneur; with the permission of your Royal Highness, it ought not to be and will not be!"

"Because without marriage you would be wanting in honour?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"And in what and why would you be wanting in honour, if you did not marry Mlle. Antonine?"

"Because we have sworn before Heaven to belong to each other, monseigneur," replied Frantz, with restrained energy.

The prince, half reassured, added, however:

"And pray, under what circumstances have you exchanged this oath?"

"Fearing to displease you, monseigneur, or fatigue your attention, I discontinued my story."

"Well, continue it."

"Monseigneur, I fear —"

"Continue, — omit nothing. I wish to know all of this affair."

"The uncle of mademoiselle went out in the evening, monseigneur, and she remained at home alone. The season was so beautiful that Mlle. Antonine spent all her evenings in the garden. We grew better acquainted with each other; we talked long together many times, — she, on the little bench, I, leaning on my elbow on the wall; she told me all about her life; I told her about mine, and, above all, monseigneur, my respectful affection for you, to whom I owe so much. Mlle. Antonine shares this moment my profound gratitude to your Royal Highness."

At this point of the conversation, the sound of a gradually approaching step attracted the attention of the prince. He turned and saw one of his aids, who advanced, but stopped respectfully at a little distance. At a sign from the archduke, the officer came forward.

"What is it, sir?" asked the prince.

"His Excellence, the minister of war, has just arrived; he is at the order of your Royal Highness for the visit which is to be made to the Hôtel des Invalides."

"Say to his Excellence that I will be with him in a moment."

As the aide-de-camp departed, the prince turned coldly to Frantz, and said:

"Return to your apartments, monsieur; you are under arrest until the moment of your departure."

"My departure, monseigneur?"

"Yes."

"My departure?" repeated Frantz, amazed. "Oh, my God! And where are you going to send me, monseigneur?"

"You will see. I shall confide you to the care of Major Butler; he will answer for you to me. Before twenty-four hours you shall leave Paris."

"Mercy, monseigneur!" cried Frantz, in a supplicating voice, not able to believe what he had heard. "Have pity on me, and do not compel me to depart."

"Return to your apartments," said the prince, with the severity of a military command, making a sign for Frantz to pass before him. "I never revoke an order once given. Obey!"

Frantz, overwhelmed, returned in sadness to his chamber, situated on the first floor of the palace, not far from the apartment of the archduke, and looking out upon the garden. At seven o'clock a dinner was served the young prisoner, which he did not touch. Night came, and Frantz, to his great astonishment, and to his deep and painful humiliation, heard his outside doors fastened with a double lock. Toward midnight, when the whole palace was asleep, he opened his window softly, went out on the balcony, and leaning outside, succeeded, with the aid of his cane, in removing a little of the wall plastered on one of the posts of a window-blind on the ground floor. It was on this tottering support that Frantz, with as much dexterity as temerity, having straddled the balcony railing, set the point of his foot; then, aiding himself by the rounds of the blind as a ladder, he reached the ground, ran into the shady walk, jumped the little wall, and soon found himself in the garden of the house occupied by Antonine.

Although the moon was veiled by thick clouds, a dim light shone under the great trees which had served as a place of meeting for Antonine and Frantz; at the end of a few moments, he perceived at a distance a figure in white, rapidly approaching; the young girl soon ap-

proached him and said, in a voice which betrayed her excitement:

"I came only for one minute, that you might not be disappointed, Frantz. I have taken advantage of my uncle's sleep; he is very sick, and I cannot stay away from him a longer time. Good-bye, Frantz," added Antonine, with a deep sigh; "it is very sad to part so soon, but it must be. Good-bye, again, — perhaps I can see you to-morrow."

The young man was so crushed by the news he had to communicate to the young girl that he had not the strength to interrupt her. Then, in a voice broken by sobs, he exclaimed:

"Antonine, we are lost!"

"Lost!"

"I am going away."

"You!"

"The prince compels me to go."

"Oh, my God!" murmured Antonine, turning pale and leaning for support on the back of the rustic bench. "Oh, my God!"

And, unable to utter another word, she burst into tears. After a heartrending silence, she said:

"And you hoped for the consent of the prince, Frantz."

"Alas! I hoped to obtain it by simply telling him how much I loved you, and how much you deserved that love. The prince is inflexible."

"To go away, — to be separated from each other, Frantz," murmured Antonine, in a broken voice; "but it is not possible, — it would kill us both with sorrow, and the prince would not do that."

"His will is inflexible; but whatever may happen," cried Frantz, falling at the young girl's knees, "yes, although I am a foreigner here, without family, without knowing what may be the consequence, I will stay in spite of the prince. Have courage, Antonine —"

"'Monseigneur, listen to me.'"
Original etching by Adrien Marcel.

Frantz could not continue; he saw a light shining in the distance, and a voice in great pain called:

"Mlle. Antonine!"

"My God! that is my uncle's nurse, — she is looking for me!" cried the young girl; then, turning to Frantz, she said, "Frantz, if you go away, I shall die."

And Antonine disappeared in the direction of the light.

The young man, overcome by grief, fell on the bench, hiding his face in his hands. Presently he heard a voice, coming down the walk in the garden of the Élysée, calling him by name:

"Frantz!"

He started, thinking it was the voice of the prince; he was not mistaken. A second time his name was called.

Fear, the habit of passive obedience, and his respect for the archduke, as well as his gratitude, led Frantz back to the little wall which separated the two gardens; behind this wall he saw the prince standing in the light of the moon. The prince extended his hand with haughty reserve, and assisted him to regain the walk.

"Immediately upon my return, I entered your apartment," said the archduke, severely. "I did not find you. Your open window told me all. Now, follow me."

"Monseigneur," cried Frantz, throwing himself at the feet of the prince, and clasping his hands, "monseigneur, listen to me."

"Major Butler," said the prince, in a loud voice, addressing a person who until then had been hidden by the shade, "accompany Count Frantz to his apartment, and do not leave him a moment. I hold you responsible for him."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE day after these events had transpired the archduke, dressed always in his uniform, for he carried military etiquette to its most extreme limit, was in his study about two o'clock in the afternoon. One of his aids, a man about forty years old, of calm and resolute countenance, was standing before the table on the side opposite the prince, who was seated, writing, with a haughtier, severer, and more care-worn manner than usual. As he wrote, without raising his eyes to the officer, he said to him:

"Is Captain Blum with Count Frantz?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"You have just seen the physician."

"Yes, monseigneur."

"What does he think of the count's condition?"

"He finds it more satisfactory, monseigneur."

"Does he think Count Frantz can support the fatigues of the journey without danger?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Major Butler, go and give the order at once to prepare one of my travelling carriages."

"Yes, monseigneur."

"This evening at six o'clock you will depart with Count Frantz. Here is the guide for your route," added the prince, handing to his aid the note he had just written.

Then he remarked:

"Major Butler, you will not wait long for the proofs

of my satisfaction if you accomplish, with your usual devotion and firmness, the mission I entrust to you."

"Your Highness can rely upon me."

"I know it, but I also know that, once recovering from his present dejection, and being no longer restrained by his respect for me, Count Frantz will certainly try to escape from your care along the route, and to get back to Paris at any risk. If this misfortune happens, sir, take care, for all my resentment will fall on you."

"I am certain that I shall not be undeserving of the kindness of your Highness."

"I hope so. Do not forget, too, to write to me twice a day until you reach the frontier."

"I will not fail, monseigneur."

"Upon your arrival on the territory of the Rhine provinces, send a despatch to the military authority."

"Yes, monseigneur."

"The end of your journey reached, you will inform me, and you will receive new orders from me."

At this moment the prince, hearing a light knock at the door, said to the major:

"See who that is."

Another aide-de-camp handed the officer a letter, and said, in a low voice:

"The envoy from Mexico has just sent this letter for his Highness."

And the aide-de-camp went out.

The major presented the letter to the prince, informing him whence it came.

"I recommend to you once more the strictest vigilance, Major Butler," said the archduke, putting aside the letter from the Mexican envoy without opening it. "You will answer to me in conducting Count Frantz to the frontier."

"I give you my word, monseigneur."

"Go, major, I accept your word, I know its value. If you keep it, you will have only cause for congratulation.

So, make your preparation to leave at six o'clock promptly. Diesbach will provide you with the money necessary for your journey."

The major bowed respectfully.

"Say to Colonel Heidelberg that, after a few minutes, he can introduce the envoy of Mexico and the person who accompanies him."

"Yes, monseigneur."

The officer bowed profoundly, and went out.

The prince, left alone, said to himself as he slowly unsealed the letter which had been delivered to him:

"I must save this unhappy young man from his own folly. Such a marriage! It is insanity. Well, I must be mad myself to feel so disturbed about the consequences of this foolish passion of Frantz, as if I had not complete power over him. It is not anger, it is pity which his conduct ought to inspire in me."

In the midst of these reflections the prince had broken the seal of the letter and glanced perfunctorily over its contents. Suddenly he jumped up from his arm-chair; his haughty features took on an expression of righteous indignation, as he said:

"The Marquise de Miranda, that infernal woman who recently created such a scandal in Bologna, — almost a revolution, — by exposing that unfortunate cardinal to the hisses and the fury of an entire populace already so much disaffected! Oh, on no pretext will I receive that shameless creature."

And the prince sprang to the door to give the order not to admit the marquise.

He was too late.

The folding doors opened at that very moment, and she entered, accompanied by the envoy of Mexico.

Taking advantage of the surprise of the archduke, the cause of which he did not understand, the diplomatist bowed profoundly, and said:

"Monseigneur, I dare hope that your Highness will

accept the excuses I have just had the honour of offering you by letter on the subject of my omission yesterday of an important formality. I ought to have mentioned the name of the person for whom I solicited the favour of an audience from your Highness. I have repaired this omission, and now it only remains for me to have the honour of presenting to your Highness the Marquise de Miranda, who bears a distinguished name in our country, and to commend her to the kindness of your Highness."

The diplomatist, taking the prolonged silence of the prince for a dismissal, bowed respectfully, and went out, not a little disappointed at so cold a reception.

Madeleine and the archduke were left alone.

The marquise was, according to her custom, as simply and amply dressed as on the day before; only, by chance or intention, a little veil of English point adorned her hood of white crape, and almost entirely hid her face.

The prince, whose manners partook at the same time of military harshness and religious austerity, — his love for the mother of Frantz having been his first and only youthful error, — looked with a sort of aversion upon this woman, who, in his eyes, symbolised the most profound and most dangerous perversity, for popular rumour accused the marquise of attacking, by preference, with her seductions, persons of the most imposing and sacred character; and then, finally, the widely known adventure with the cardinal legate had, as the archduke believed, been followed by such deplorable consequences that a sentiment of political revenge was added to his hatred of Madeleine. So, notwithstanding his cold and polished dignity, he thought at first of dismissing his importunate visitor unceremoniously, or of disdainfully retiring into another chamber without uttering a word. But finally, the curiosity to see this woman about whom so many strange rumours were in circulation, and, above

all, a keen desire to treat her with that contempt which in his opinion she deserved, modified his resolution. He remained; but instead of offering a seat to Madeleine, who studied his face attentively through her veil, he leaned his back squarely against the chimney, crossed his arms, and, with his head thrown back, his eyebrows imperiously elevated, he measured her with all the haughtiness of his sovereign pride, shut himself up in a chilling silence, and said to her not one word of encouragement or common civility.

The marquise, accustomed to produce a very different impression, and feeling, unconsciously perhaps, a kind of intimidation which many persons feel in the presence of high rank, particularly when it is identified with such insolent arrogance, was abashed by such a crushing reception, when she had hoped so much from the courtesy of the prince.

However, as she was acting for interests she believed to be sacred, and as she was brave, she conquered her emotion, and, as the Spanish proverb naturalised in Mexico says, she resolved bravely to "take the bull by the horns." So, seating herself carelessly in an armchair, she said to the prince, with the easiest and most smiling manner in the world:

"I come, monseigneur, simply to ask two things of you, one almost impossible and the other altogether impossible."

The archduke was confounded; his sovereign rank, his dignity, the severity of his character, his inflexible code of etiquette, always so powerful in the courts of the North, had accustomed him to see women, even, approach him with the most humble respect. Judge, then, of his dismay when Madeleine continued gaily, with familiar ease:

"You do not reply, monseigneur? How shall I interpret the silence of your Highness? Is it reflection? Is it timidity, or is it consent? Can it be

impoliteness? Impoliteness? No, I cannot believe that. In touching the soil of France, slaves become free, and men with the least gallantry at once assume an exquisite courtesy."

The prince, almost crazed by the amazement and anger produced by these audacious words, remained silent.

The marquise continued, smiling:

"Nothing? Not a word? Come, monseigneur, what is the real significance of the continued speechlessness of your Highness? Again I ask, is it reflection? Then reflect. Is it timidity? Then overcome it. Is it impoliteness? Remember that we are in France, and that I am a woman. But can I, on the contrary, regard your silence as a blind consent to what I am going to ask of you? Then say so at once, that I may at least inform you what are the favours that you grant me so graciously beforehand, and for which I desire to thank you cordially."

Then Madeleine, taking off her gloves, extended her hand to the archduke. That perfect little hand, white, delicate, tapering, fluttering, veined with azure, whose finger-nails resembled rose-coloured shells, attracted the attention of the prince; in all his life he had never seen such a hand. But soon, ashamed, revolting at the thought of yielding to such a triviality at such an important moment, the blush of indignation mounted to his brow, and he sought some word superlatively scornful and wounding, that he might crush, with a single club-like blow, this presumptuous woman, whose insolence had already lasted too long for the dignity of an archduke.

Unfortunately, the prince was more accustomed to command his troops, or to receive the homage of courtiers, than to find crushing words on the spur of the moment, especially when they were wanted to crush a young and pretty woman; nevertheless, he persisted in seeking.

This serene cogitation gave Madeleine the time to hide her hand under her large sleeves, and to say to the prince, with a mischievous smile:

"There is no longer room for doubt, monseigneur, that the silence of your Highness is due to timidity, and, too, to German timidity. I am acquainted with that. After the timidity of the scholar, there is none more unconquerable, and, therefore, more venerable, but there are limitations to everything. So, I beg you, monseigneur, recover yourself. I do not think there is anything in me calculated to awe your Highness," added the marquise, without lifting the veil which concealed her features.

The archduke was unfortunate; in spite of his desire, he could not find the crushing word, but, feeling how ridiculous his position was becoming, he said;

"I do not know, madame, how you dared to present yourself here."

"But I present myself here in accordance with your consent, monseigneur."

"When you requested an audience yesterday, I did not know your name, madame."

"And what has my name done to you, monseigneur?"

"Your name, madame? Your name?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Your name has been the scandal of Germany; you have made the most spiritual of our poets a pagan, an idolater, a materialist."

"Indeed, monseigneur," replied Madeleine, with an accent of simplicity quite provincial, "that was not my fault."

"It was not your fault?"

"And then, where is the great evil, monseigneur? Your religious poet made mediocre verses, but now he writes magnificent ones."

"They are only the more dangerous, madame. And his soul, — his soul?"

"His soul has passed into his verses, monseigneur, so now it is twice immortal."

"And the cardinal legate, madame?"

"At least, you cannot reproach me for having injured his soul, for he had none."

"What, madame! have you not sufficiently vilified the sacred character of the prince of the Church, this priest who until then was so austere, this statesman who for twenty years was the terror of the impious and the seditious? Have you not delivered him to the contempt, the hatred, of wicked people? But for unexpected succour, they would have murdered him; in short, madame, were you not on the point of revolutionising Bologna?"

"Ah, monseigneur, you flatter me."

"And you dare, madame, to present yourself in the palace of a prince who has so much interest in the peace and submission of Germany and Italy? You dare come to ask favours of me, — things that you yourself say are impossible or almost impossible? And in what tone do you make this inconceivable request? In a tone familiar and jesting, as if you were certain of obtaining anything from me. You have made a mistake, madame, a great mistake! I resemble, I give you fair warning, neither the poet, Moser-Hartmann, nor the cardinal legate, nor many others, they say you have bewitched; in truth, your impudence would seem to be more like a dream or nightmare than reality. But who are you then, madame, you who think yourself so far above respect and duty as to treat me as an equal, — me, whom the princesses of royal families approach only with deference?"

"Alas, monseigneur! I am only a poor woman," replied Madeleine.

And she threw back the veil which had concealed her face from the eyes of the archduke.

CHAPTER XV.

THE prince, carried away by the vehemence of his furious indignation, had, as he talked, come nearer and nearer the marquise, who still sat at her ease in the armchair.

When she threw back her veil, at the same time throwing her head back lightly, so as to be able to fix her eyes upon the eyes of the prince, he stood motionless, and experienced that mingling of surprise, admiration, and involuntary pain which almost everybody felt at the sight of that charming face, to which a pallid complexion, large azure blue eyes, black eyebrows, and blonde hair gave a fascination so singular.

This profound impression made upon the prince, Charles Dutertre had also received, notwithstanding his love for his wife, notwithstanding the agonising fears of ruin and disaster by which he was besieged.

For a few seconds the archduke remained, so to speak, under the fascination of this fixed, penetrating gaze, in which the marquise endeavoured to concentrate all the attraction, all the magnetism which was in her, and to cast it into the eyes of the prince, for the projecting power of Madeleine's glance was, so to speak, intermittent, subject, if we may use the expression, to pulsations; so at each of these pulsations, the rebound of which he seemed to feel physically, the archduke started involuntarily; his icy pride appeared to melt like snow in the sun; his haughty attitude seemed to bend; his arrogant countenance betrayed inexpressible uneasiness.

Suddenly Madeleine pulled her veil over her face,

bowed her head, and tried to efface herself as much as possible under the ample folds of her mantle and trailing robe, which completely hid her small foot, as her wide sleeves hid the beautiful hand she had extended to the prince, who now saw before him only an undefined and chastely veiled form.

The most provoking coquetry, the boldest exposure of personal charms, would have been ingenuousness itself compared to this mysterious reserve, which, concealing from view the whole person from the point of the foot to the tips of the fingers, gave free rein to the imagination, which took fire at the recollection of the wonderful stories of the marquise current in Paris.

When Madeleine's face again disappeared under her veil, the prince, delivered from the influence which had held him in spite of himself, regained his self-possession, roughly curbed his weakness, and, as a safeguard against all dangerous allurement, forced himself to ponder the deplorable adventures which proved how fatal was the power of this woman over men known to be strong and inexorable.

But alas! the fall or transformation of these men only brought back more forcibly the irresistible fascination of the marquise. He felt the grave and imminent peril, but every one knows the attraction of danger.

In vain the prince argued with himself, that, naturally phlegmatic, he had attained the maturity of age without ever having submitted to the empire of those gross passions which degrade men. In vain he said to himself that he was a prince of the royal blood, that he owed it to the sovereign dignity of his rank not to debase himself by yielding to shameful enticements. In a word, the unhappy archduke philosophised marvellously well, but as uselessly as a man who, seeing in terror that he is rolling down a steep declivity, gravely philosophises upon the delightful advantages of repose.

Words, phrases, and pages are necessary to portray

impressions as instantaneous as thought, and all that we have described at such length, from the moment Madeleine lifted her veil to the moment she dropped it again, transpired in a few seconds, and the archduke, in the midst of his efforts at self-restraint, unconsciously, no doubt, — so much did his philosophy disengage his mind from matter, — tried, we say, yes, tried again to see Madeleine's features through the lace which concealed them.

"I told you, monseigneur," said the marquise, holding her head down from the covetous and anxious gaze of the archduke, "I told you that I was a poor widow who values her reputation, and who really does not deserve your severity."

"Madame — "

"Oh, I do not reproach you, monseigneur. You, no doubt, like many others, believe certain rumours — "

"Rumours, madame!" cried the archduke, delighted to feel his anger kindle again. "Rumours! The scandalous apostasy of the poet, Moser-Hartmann, was a rumour, was it?"

"What you call his apostasy is a fact, monseigneur; that may be, but — "

"Perhaps the degradation of the cardinal legate was also a vain rumour?" continued the archduke, impetuously interrupting Madeleine.

"That may be a fact, monseigneur, but — "

"So, madame, you confess yourself that — "

"Pardon me, monseigneur, listen to me. I am called Madeleine; it is the name of a great sinner, as you know."

"She received pardon, madame."

"Yes, because she loved much; nevertheless, believe me, monseigneur, I am not seeking an excuse in the example of the life of my patron saint. I have done nothing which requires pardon, no, nothing, absolutely nothing, monseigneur. That seems to astonish you very

much. So, to make myself entirely understood, which is quite embarrassing, I shall be obliged, at the risk of appearing pedantic, to appeal to the classical knowledge of Your Highness."

"What do you mean, madame?"

"Something very odd; but the acrimony of your reproaches, as well as other reasons, compels me to a confession, or rather to a very singular justification."

"Madame, explain yourself."

"You know, monseigneur, upon what condition the vestal virgins at Rome were chosen?"

"Certainly, madame," replied the prince, with a modest blush, and, he added, ingenuously, "but I cannot see what relation —"

"Ah, well, monseigneur," interrupted Madeleine, smiling at the Germanism of the prince, "if we were at Rome under the empire of the Cæsars, I would have every possible right to keep the sacred fire on the altar of the chaste goddess. In a word, I am a widow without ever having been married; because, upon my return from Europe the Marquis de Miranda, my relative and benefactor, died, and he married me on his death-bed that he might leave me his name and his fortune."

The accent of truth is irresistible, and the prince at once believed the words of Madeleine, in spite of the amazement produced by this revelation so diametrically opposite to the rumours of adventures and gallantries which were rife about the marquise.

The astonishment of the prince was mingled with a vague satisfaction which he did not care to estimate. However, fearing he might fall into a snare, he said, no longer with passion, but with a sorrowful recrimination:

"You count too much on my credulity, madame. What! when just now you confessed to me that —"

"I beg your pardon, monseigneur; do me the favour to reply to a few questions."

"Speak, madame."

"You certainly have all the valiant exterior of a man of war, monseigneur, and when I saw you in Vienna, mounted on your beautiful battle-horse, proudly cross the Prater, followed by your aides-de-camp, I often said, 'That is my type of an army general; there is a man made to command soldiers.'"

"You saw me in Vienna?" asked the archduke, whose voice softened singularly. "You observed me there?"

"Fortunately you did not know it, monseigneur, or you would have exiled me, would you not?"

"Well," replied the prince, smiling, "I fear so."

"Come, that is gallantry; I like you better so. I was saying to you, then, monseigneur, that you have the exterior of a valiant man of war, and your character responds to this exterior. But will you not confess to me that sometimes the most martial figure may hide a poltroon —"

"No one better understands that than I. I had under my orders a major-general who had the most ferocious-looking personality that could be imagined, and he was the most arrant coward."

"You will admit again, monseigneur, that sometimes the most contemptible-looking personality may hide a hero."

"Certainly, Frederick the Great, Prince Eugene, were not great in manner —"

"Alas! monseigneur, it is even so, and I, on the contrary, am different from these great men; unfortunately, I have too much manner."

"What do you mean, madame?"

"Ah, my God, yes! I am like the coward who makes everybody tremble by his stern appearance, and who is really more afraid than the most cowardly of the cowards he intimidates. In a word, I inspire that which I do not feel; picture to yourself, monseigneur, the poor icicle carrying around him flame and conflagration. And I

would have the presumption to call myself a phenomenon if I did not recollect that the beautiful fruits of my country, so bright-coloured, so delicate, so fragrant, awaken in me a furious appetite, without sharing the least in the world the fine appetite they give, or ever feeling the slightest desire to be crunched. It is so with me, monseigneur, it seems that as innocently as the fruits of my country I excite, in some respects, the hunger of an ogre, I who am of a cenobitic frugality. So now I have concluded to be no longer astonished at the influence I exercise involuntarily, but as, after all, this action is powerful, inasmuch as it excites the most violent passions of men, I try to elicit the best that is possible from my victims, either for themselves or for the good of others, and that, I swear without coquetry, deception, or promises, if one says to me, 'I am passionately in love with you,' I answer, 'Well, cherish your passion, perhaps its fire will melt my ice, perhaps the lava will hide itself in me under the snow. Fan your flame, then, let it burn until it wins me; I ask nothing better, for I am as free as the air, and I am twenty-two years old.'"

As she uttered these words, Madeleine raised her head, lifted her veil, and gazed intently at the archduke.

The marquise spoke truly, for her passion for her blond archangel, of whom she had talked to Sophie Dutertre, had never had anything terrestrial in it.

The prince believed Madeleine; first, because truth almost always carries conviction with it, then, because he felt happy in putting faith in the words of the young woman. He blushed less in acknowledging to himself the profound and sudden impression produced on him by this singular creature, when he realised that, after all, she had been worthy of guarding the sacred fire of Vesta; so, the imprudent man, his eyes fixed on the eyes of Madeleine, contemplating them with passionate eagerness, drank at leisure the enchanted love-potion.

Madeleine resumed, smiling:

"At this moment, monseigneur, you are asking yourself, I am sure, a question which I often ask myself."

"What is that, pray?"

"You are asking yourself (to speak like an old-time romance), 'Who is he who will make me share his passion?' Ah, well, I, too, am very anxious to penetrate the future on this subject."

"That future, nevertheless, depends on you."

"No, monseigneur, to draw music from the lyre, some one must make it vibrate."

"And who will that happy mortal be?"

"My God! who knows? Perhaps you, monseigneur."

"I!" cried the prince, charmed, transported. "I!"

"I say perhaps."

"Oh, what must I do?"

"Please me."

"And how shall I do that?"

"Listen, monseigneur."

"I pray you, do not call me monseigneur; it is too ceremonious."

"Oh, oh, monseigneur; it is a great favour for a prince to be treated with familiarity; he must deserve it. You ask me how you may please me. I will give you not an example, but a fact. The poet, Moser-Hartmann, whose apostasy you say I caused, addressed to me the most singular remark in the world. One day he met me at the house of a mutual friend, looked at me a long time, and then said, with an air of angry alarm: 'Madame, for the peace of spirituality, you ought to be buried alive!' And he went out, but next day he came to see me, madly in love, a victim, he told me, to a sudden passion, — as sudden and novel as it was uncontrollable. 'Let your passion burn,' I said to him, 'but hear the advice of a friend; the passion devours you, let it flow in your verse. Become a great poet, and perhaps your glory will intoxicate me.'"

"And did the inebriation ever come to you?" said the prince.

"No, but glory has come to my lover to console him, and a poet can be consoled for the loss of everything by glory. Ah, well, monseigneur, have I used my influence well or ill?"

Suddenly the archduke started.

A keen suspicion pierced his heart. Dissimulating this painful doubt, he said to Madeleine, with a forced smile:

"But, madame, your adventure with the cardinal legate did not have so happy an end for him. What is left to console him?"

"There rests with him the consciousness of having delivered a country that abhorred him from his presence," replied Madeleine, gaily. "Is there nothing in that, monseigneur?"

"Come now, between us, what interest had you in making this unhappy man the victim of a terrible scandal?"

"How! What interest, monseigneur? What but the interest of unmasking an infamous hypocrite, of chasing him out of a city that he oppressed,—in short, to cover him with contempt and shame. 'I believe in your passion,' said I to him, 'and perhaps I may share it if you will mask as a Hungarian hussar, and come with me to the ball of the Rialto, my dear cardinal; it is an extravagant, foolish caprice on my part, no doubt, but that is my condition, and, besides, who will recognise you under the mask?' This horrible priest had his head turned; he accepted, and I destroyed him."

"And you will destroy me, madame, as you did the cardinal legate," cried the archduke, rising and making a supreme effort to break the charm whose irresistible power he already felt. "I see the snare; I have enemies; you wish by your perfidious seductions, to drag me into some dangerous proceeding, and afterwards to

hand me over to the contempt and ridicule that my weakness would deserve. But, bless God! he has opened my eyes in time. I recognise with horror that infernal fascination which took from me the use of my reason, and which was not love even, — no, I yielded to the grossest, most degrading passion which can lower man to the level of a brute, to that passion which, to my shame and to yours, I desire to stigmatise aloud as lust, madame!"

Madeleine shrugged her shoulders and began to laugh derisively, then rising from her seat and walking up to the prince, who had stepped back to the chimney, she took him gently by the hand, and led him back to a chair near her own, without his having the strength to resist this peaceable violence.

"Do me the favour to listen to me, monseigneur," said Madeleine. "I have only a few more words to say to you, and then you will not see the Marquise de Miranda again in your life."

CHAPTER XVI.

When Madeleine had seated the prince near her, she said to him:

"Listen, monseigneur, I will be frank, so frank that I defy you not to believe me. I came here with the hope of turning your head."

"So," cried the prince, astonished, "you confess it!"

"Entirely. That end attained, I wished to use my influence over you, to obtain, as I told you, monseigneur, at the beginning of our interview, two things, one considered almost impossible, the other as altogether impossible."

"You are right, madame, to defy me not to believe you," replied the prince, with a constrained smile. "I believe you."

"The two deeds that I wished to obtain from you were great, noble, and generous; they would have made you esteemed and respected. That is very far, I think, from wishing to abuse my influence over you to excite you to evil or indignity, as you suppose."

"Well, madame, come to the point; what is it?"

"First, an act of clemency, or rather of justice, which would rally around you a multitude of hearts in Lombardy, — the free and full pardon of Colonel Pernetti."

The prince jumped up from his chair, and exclaimed:

"Never, madame, never!"

"The free and full pardon of Colonel Pernetti, one of the most honoured men in all Italy," pursued Madeleine, without noticing the interruption of the prince. "The reasonable pride of this noble-hearted man will prevent

his asking you for the slightest alleviation of his woes, but come generously to his relief, and his gratitude will assure you of his devotion."

"I repeat to you, madame, that important reasons of state oppose your request. It is impossible, altogether impossible."

"To be sure. I began, you know, by telling you that, monseigneur. As to the other thing, doubtless more impossible still, it simply concerns your consent to the marriage of a young man whom you have brought up."

"I!" cried the archduke, as if he could not believe his ears. "I, consent to the marriage of Count Frantz?"

"I do not know if he is a count, but I do know that his name is Frantz, since it was told me this morning by Mlle. Antonine Hubert, an angel of sweetness and beauty, whom I have loved from her childhood, and for whom I feel the tenderness of a mother and a sister."

"Madame, in three hours from this moment Count Frantz will have left Paris, — that is my reply."

"My God, monseigneur, that is admirable! All this is impossible, absolutely impossible. I say again, I admit that it is impossible!"

"Then, madame, why do you ask it?"

"Why, to obtain it, of course, monseigneur."

"What! notwithstanding all I have just said to you, you dare hope still?"

"I have that presumption, monseigneur."

"Such self-conceit — "

"Is very modest because I am not counting on my presence."

"On what, then, madame, do you rely?"

"On my absence, monseigneur," said Madeleine, rising.

"On your absence?"

"On your remembrance, if you prefer it."

"You are going," said the prince, unable to conceal his regret and vexation, "you are going so soon?"

"It is my last and only means of bringing you to an agreement."

"But really, madame —"

"Wait, monseigneur, do you wish me to tell you what is going to happen?"

"Let us hear, madame."

"I am going to leave you. At first you will be relieved of a great burden; my presence will no longer beset you with all sorts of temptations, which have their agony as well as their charm; you will banish me entirely from your thoughts. Unfortunately, by degrees, and in spite of yourself, I will return to occupy your thoughts; my mysterious, veiled figure will follow you everywhere; you will feel still more how little there is of the platonic in your inclination toward me, and these sentiments will become only more irritating and more obstinate. To-morrow, the next day, perhaps, reflecting that, after all, I asked noble and generous actions only of you, you will bitterly regret my departure, but it will be too late, monseigneur."

"Too late?"

"Too late for you; not for me. I have taken it into my head that Colonel Pernetti will have his pardon, and that Count Frantz will marry Antonine. You understand, monseigneur, that it must be."

"In spite of me?"

"In spite of you."

"That would be rather difficult."

"So it is. But, let us see, monseigneur, to mention to you only facts which you already know; when one has known how to induce the cardinal legate to masquerade as a Hungarian hussar, when one has known how to create a great poet by the fire of a single glance, when one has known how to render amorous — and I humbly confess I use the expression in its earthly sense — a man like you, monseigneur, it is evident that one can accomplish something else also. You force, do you not,

this poor Count Frantz to leave Paris? But the journey is long, and before he is out of France I have two days before me. A little delay in the pardon of Colonel Pernetti will be nothing for him, and, after all, his pardon does not depend on you alone, monseigneur; you cannot imagine to what point the rebound of influence may reach, and, thank God, here in France I have the means and the liberty to act. Is it war that you wish, monseigneur? Then let it be war. I depart, and I leave you already wounded, — that is to say, in love. Ah, my God! although I have a right to be proud of my success, it is not vanity which makes me insist upon the sudden impression I have made on you; because, to tell the truth, I have not employed the least coquetry in all this; almost always I have kept my veil down, and I am dressed as a veritable grandmother. Well, good-bye, monseigneur. At least do me the favour to accompany me to the door of your front parlour; war does not forbid courtesy."

The archduke was in unutterable uneasiness of mind. He felt that Madeleine was speaking the truth, for, already, at the bare thought of seeing her depart, perhaps for ever, he experienced a real sorrow; then, reflecting that if the charm, the singular and almost irresistible attraction of this woman could act so powerfully on him, who for so many reasons believed himself protected from such an influence, as well as from others which might induce him to submit to this control, he felt a sort of vague but bitter and angry jealousy; and while he could not make up his mind to grant the pardon asked of him, or to consent to the marriage of Frantz, he tried, like all undecided minds, to temporise, and said to the marquise, with emotion:

"Since I cannot see you again, at least prolong your visit a little."

"For what purpose, monseigneur?"

"It matters little to you if it makes me happy."

"It would not by any means make you happy, monseigneur, because you have neither the strength to let me depart nor to grant me what I ask of you."

"That is true," answered the prince, sighing, "for one request seems as impossible to me as the other."

"Ah, to-morrow, after my departure, how you will repent!"

The prince, after a long silence, said, with effort, yet with the most insinuating voice:

"Wait, my dear marquise, let us suppose that which is not supposable, that perhaps some day I may think of granting the pardon of Pernetti."

"A supposition? perhaps some day you will think of it? How vague and unsatisfactory all that is, monseigneur! Why not say, positively, 'Admit that I grant you the pardon of Colonel Pernetti.'"

"Very well, then, admit it."

"Good; you grant me this pardon, monseigneur, and you consent to the marriage of Frantz? I must have all or nothing."

"As to the marriage, never, never!"

"Do not say never, monseigneur. Do you know anything about it?"

"After all, a supposition binds me to nothing. Well, to make an end of it, let us admit that I grant all you desire. I will be at least certain of my recompense —"

"You ask it of me, monseigneur? Is not every generous action its own reward?"

"Granted. But there is one, in my eyes the most precious of all, and that one you alone can give."

"Oh, make no conditions, monseigneur."

"Why?"

"Frankly, monseigneur, can I pledge myself to anything? Does not all depend on you and not on me? You must please me, that concerns you."

"Oh! what a woman you are!" said the prince, with

vexation. "But, really, shall I please you? Do you think I can please you?"

"My faith, monseigneur, I know nothing about it. You have done nothing so far but receive me with rudeness, I can truthfully say."

"My God! I was wrong, forgive me; if you only knew the uneasiness, I might almost say the fear, that you inspire in me, my dear marquise!"

"Come, I forgive you the past, monseigneur, and promise you to allow myself to be captivated with the best will in the world, and, as I am very frank, I will even add that it does seem to me that I would like you so much that you might succeed."

"Truly!" cried the prince, transported.

"Yes; you are half a sovereign, and you perhaps will be one some day, and there may be all sorts of good and beautiful things for you to order through the influence of this consuming passion you have just branded like a real capuchin, — allow me the expression. Come, monseigneur, if the good God has put this passion in all his creatures, he knew what he was doing. It is an immense power, because, in the hope of satisfying it, those who are under its influence are capable of everything, even the most generous actions, is it not true, monseigneur?"

"So," added the prince, with increasing rapture, "I can hope —"

"Hope all at your ease, monseigneur, but, I tell you plainly, I bind myself to nothing. My faith! fan your flame, make it burn, let it melt my snow."

"But, in a word, suppose that I grant all that you ask, what would you feel for me?"

"Perhaps this first proof of devotion to my wishes would make a deep impression upon me, but I cannot assert it, my power of divination does not extend so far as that, monseigneur."

"Ah, you are pitiless!" cried the archduke, with a

vexation that had a touch of sorrow in it, "you only know how to exact."

"Would it be better to make false promises, monseigneur? That would be worthy neither of you nor of me, and then, in a word, let us speak as people who have hearts. Once more, what is it I ask of you? to show justice and mercy to the most honourable of men, and paternal affection for the orphan you have reared! If you only knew how these poor orphans love each other! What innocence! what tenderness! what despair! This morning, as she told me of the ruin of her hopes, Antonine was moved to tears."

"Frantz is of illustrious birth. I have other plans and other views for him," replied the prince, impatiently. "He ought not to make a misalliance."

"The word is a pretty one. And then who am I, monseigneur? Magdalena Pérès, daughter of an honest Mexican merchant, ruined by failures in business, and a marquise by chance. You love me, nevertheless, without fear of misalliance."

"Ah, madame! I! I!"

"You, you, it is another thing, is it not? as the comedy says."

"At least, I am free in my actions."

"And why should not Frantz be free in his, when his tastes restrain him to a modest and honourable life, adorned by a pure and noble love? Come, monseigneur, if you were, as you say, smitten with me, how tenderly you would compassionate the despairing love of those two poor children, who adore each other with all the ardour and innocence of their age! If passion does not render you better and more generous, this passion is not true, and if I am to share it I must begin by believing in it, which I cannot do when I see your relentless cruelty to Frantz."

"Ah, my God, if I loved him less I would not be relentless!"

"A singular way to love people!"

"Have I not told you that I intended him for a high destiny?"

"And I tell you, monseigneur, that the high destiny you reserve for him would be odious to him. He is born for a happy, sweet, and modest life; his tastes are simple, the timidity of his character, his qualities even, separate him from all that is showy and pompous; is it not true?"

"Then," said the prince, greatly surprised, "you are acquainted with him?"

"I have never seen him."

"How, then, do you know?"

"Has not this dear Antonine given me all her confidence? Is it not true that, according to the way you love people, you are able to divine their true character? In a word, monseigneur, the character of Frantz is such as I have described, is it not, — yes or no?"

"It is true, such is his character."

"And you would have the cruelty to impose upon him an existence which would be insupportable to him, when there under his hand he would find the happiness of his life?"

"But, know that I love Frantz as my own son, and I will never consent to be separated from him."

"Great pleasure for you to have constantly under your eyes the sad face of a poor creature whose eternal misery you have caused! Besides, Antonine is an orphan; nothing forbids her accompanying Frantz; in the place of one child, you would have two. What a relief from your grandeur, from the adulations of a false and selfish and artificial society would the sight of this sweet and smiling happiness be to you; with what joy would you go to refresh your heart and soul in the home of these two children who would cherish you with all the happiness they would owe to you!"

"Stop, leave me," cried the prince, more and more

moved. "I do not know what inconceivable power your words have, but I feel my firmest resolutions give way, I feel the convictions of my whole life growing weak."

"Do you complain of that, monseigneur! Hold! Between us, without detracting from princes, I think they would often do well to renounce the convictions of all their life, for God knows what these convictions may be. Come, believe me, yield to the impression which now dominates you, it is good and generous."

"Ah, my God, in this moment do I know how to distinguish good from evil?"

"For that, monseigneur, interrogate the faces of those whose happiness you have assured; when you will say to one, 'Go, poor exile, return to the country that you weep; your brothers wait for you with open arms,' and to the other, 'My beloved child, be happy, marry Antonine,' then look well at both, monseigneur, and if tears moisten their eyes, as at this moment they moisten yours and mine, be tranquil, monseigneur, you have done good, and for this good, to encourage you because your emotion touches me, I promise you to accompany Antonine to Germany."

"Truly," cried the prince, "you promise me?"

"I must, monseigneur," said Madeleine, smiling, "give you the opportunity to captivate me."

"Ah, well, whatever may happen, whatever you may do, for perhaps you are making sport of me," said the prince, throwing himself at Madeleine's knees, "I give you my royal word that I will pardon the exile, that I—"

The archduke was suddenly interrupted by a violent noise outside the door of his study, a noise which revealed the sharp contention of several voices, above which rose distinctly the words:

"I tell you, sir, you shall not enter!"

The archduke got up from his position suddenly, turned pale with anger, and said to Madeleine, who was listening also to the noise with great surprise:

"I beseech you, go into the next chamber; something extraordinary is taking place. In an instant I will rejoin you."

At that moment a violent blow resounded behind the door.

The prince added, as he went to open the adjacent room for Madeleine:

"Enter there, please."

Then, closing the door, and wishing in his anger to know the cause of this insolent and unusual noise, he went out of his study quickly, and saw M. Pascal, whom two exasperated officers were trying to restrain.

CHAPTER XVII.

At the sight of the archduke, the officers turned aside respectfully, and M. Pascal, who seemed to have lost control of himself, cried:

"Zounds! monseigneur, you receive people here singularly!"

The prince, remembering the appointment that he had made with M. Pascal, and fearing for his own dignity some new insult from this brutal person, said, making a sign to him:

"Come, monsieur, come."

And before the eyes of the silent officers the door closed on the prince and the capitalist.

"Now, monsieur," said the archduke, pale with anger and hardly able to restrain himself, "will you tell me the cause of this scandal?"

"What! you make an appointment for me at three o'clock; I am punctual; a quarter of an hour passes, — nobody; a half-hour, — nobody; my faith! I lose patience, and I ask one of your officers to inform you that I am waiting. They answer that you have an audience. I begin to champ my bit, and at last, at the end of another half-hour, I tell your gentlemen, positively, that if they do not inform you I will go in myself."

"That, monsieur, is an insolence —"

"What, an insolence! Ah, well, monseigneur, is it I who have need of you, or you who have need of me?"

"M. Pascal!"

"Is it I who come to you, monseigneur? Is it I who have asked for the loan of money?"

"But, monsieur —"

"But, monseigneur, when I consent to interrupt my own business to come here and wait in your antechamber, — what I do for nobody, — it seems to me that you ought not to let me go to the devil for one hour, and the most important hour, too, on the Exchange, which, thanks to you, monseigneur, I have missed to-day; and in addition to that vexation, I think it very strange that your officers repulse me, when, on their refusal to announce me, I take the liberty of announcing myself."

"Discretion and the simplest propriety command you to wait the end of the audience I was giving, monsieur."

"That is possible, monseigneur, but, unfortunately, my just impatience contradicts discretion, and, frankly, I think I deserve a different reception, especially when I come to talk with you of a service that you have implored me to do for you."

In the first moment of his anger, increased by the persistent coarseness of M. Pascal, the prince had forgotten that the Marquise de Miranda could hear his conversation with his rude visitor from the adjoining room; so, overwhelmed with shame and feeling the necessity of appeasing the angry humour of the man, he endeavoured with all his self-control to appear calm, and tried to lead M. Pascal, as he talked with him, over to the embrasure of one of the windows, where Madeleine would not be able to hear the interview.

"You know, M. Pascal," said he, "that I have always been very tolerant of your bluntness, and I will continue to be so."

"Really, you are very good, monseigneur," replied Pascal, sarcastically, "but you see each one of us has his little contrarieties, and at the present moment I have very large ones, which make it impossible for me to possess the gentleness of a lamb."

"That excuse, or, rather, that explanation suffices for me, M. Pascal," replied the prince, dominated by

his need of the financier's services. "Opposition often exasperates the gentlest characters, but let us talk no longer of the past. You asked me to anticipate by two days the appointment we had made to terminate our business. I hope that you bring me a satisfactory reply."

"I bring you a thoroughly complete yes, monseigneur," replied our hero, growing gentle. And he drew a pocketbook from his pocket. "And more, to corroborate this yes, here is a draft on the Bank of France for the tenth of the amount, and this contract of mine for the remainder of the loan."

"Ah, my dear M. Pascal!" cried the prince, radiant, "you are a man — a man of gold."

"'A man of gold!' that is the word, monseigneur. That is no doubt the cause of your liking for me."

The prince did not observe this sarcasm. Delighted with the whole day, which seemed to fulfil his various desires, and impatient to dismiss the financier so as to return to Madeleine, he said:

"Since all is settled, my dear M. Pascal, we need only exchange our signatures, and to-morrow or after, at your hour, we will regulate the matter completely."

"I understand, monseigneur; once the money and the signature in your pocket, the keenest desire of your heart is to rid yourself as soon as possible of your very humble servant, Pascal, and to-morrow you will turn him over to some subaltern charged with the power of arranging the affair."

"Monsieur!"

"Good! monseigneur, is not that the natural course of things? Before the loan, one is a good genius, a half or three-quarters of God; once the money is loaned, one is a Jew or an Arab. I know this, it is the other side of the medallion. Do not hasten, monseigneur, to turn over the said medallion."

"Really, monsieur, you must explain yourself."

"Immediately, monseigneur, for I am in a hurry. The money is there, my signature is there," added he, striking the pocketbook. "The affair is concluded on one condition."

"Still conditions?"

"Each, monseigneur, manages his little affairs as he understands them. My condition, however, is very simple."

"Let us hear it, monsieur, let us come to an end."

"Yesterday I told you that I observed a handsome blond young man in the garden, where he was promenading, who lives here, you inform me."

"Without doubt, it is Count Frantz, my godson."

"Certainly, one could not see a prettier boy, I told you. Now then, as you are the godfather of this pretty boy, you ought to have some influence over him, ought you not?"

"What are you aiming at, monsieur?"

"Monseigneur, in the interest of your dear godson, I will tell you in confidence that I think the air of Paris is bad for him."

"What!"

"Yes, and you would do wisely to send him back to Germany; his health would improve very much, monseigneur, very much indeed."

"Is this a pleasantry, monsieur?"

"It is serious, monseigneur, so serious that the only condition that I put to the conclusion of our affair is that you must make your godson depart for Germany in twenty-four hours at the latest."

"Truly, monsieur, I cannot recover from my surprise. What interest have you in the departure of Frantz? It is inexplicable."

"I am going to explain myself, monseigneur, and that you may better understand the interest I have in his departure, I must make you a confidence; that will enable me to point out exactly what I expect from you.

Now then, monseigneur, such as you see me I am madly in love. Eh, my God! yes, madly in love; that seems queer to you and to me also. But the fact remains. I am in love with a young girl named Mlle. Antonine Hubert, your neighbour."

"You, monsieur, you!" exclaimed the prince, dismayed.

"Certainly, me! Me! Pascal! And why not, monsieur? 'Love is of every age,' says the song. Only, as it is also of the age of your godson, Count Frantz, he has in the most innocent way in the world begun to love Mlle. Antonine; she, not less innocently, returns the love of this pretty boy, which places me, you see, in an exceedingly disobliging frame of mind; fortunately, you can assist me in getting out of this frame of mind, monseigneur."

"I?"

"Yes, monseigneur; I will tell you how. Assure me that you will require Count Frantz to leave France this instant, — and that is easy, — and demand also that he is not to set foot in France for several years; the rest belongs to me."

"But there is another thing you do not think of, monsieur. If this young person loves Frantz?"

"The rest belongs to me, I tell you, monseigneur. President Hubert has not two days to live; my batteries are ready, the little girl will be forced to go to live with an old relative who is horribly covetous and avaricious; a hundred thousand francs will answer to me for this old vixen, and once she gets the little girl in her clutches I swear to God that Antonine will become, willing or unwilling, Madame Pascal, and that, too, without resorting to violence. Come now, monseigneur, all the love affairs of fifteen years will not hold against the desire to become, I will not say madame the archduchess, but madame the archmillionaire. Now, monseigneur, you see it all, I have frankly played the cards on the

table; having no interest in acting otherwise, it is of little or no moment to you that your godson should marry a little girl who has not a cent. The condition that I impose is the easiest possible one to fulfil. Again, is it yes, or is it no?"

The prince was overwhelmed, less by the plans of Pascal and his odious misanthropy, than by the cruel alternative in which the condition imposed by the capitalist placed him.

To order the departure of Frantz, and oppose his marriage with Antonine, was to lose Madeleine; to refuse the condition imposed by M. Pascal was to renounce the loan, which would enable him to accomplish his projects of ambitious aggrandisement.

In the midst of this conflict of two violent passions, the prince recollected that he had only given his word to Madeleine for the pardon of the exile, the tumult caused by the fury of M. Pascal having interrupted him at the very moment he was about to swear to Madeleine to consent to the marriage of Frantz.

Notwithstanding the facility which this evasion left to him, the archduke realised how powerful was the influence of Madeleine over him, as that morning even he had not hesitated to sacrifice Frantz to his ambition.

The hesitation and perplexity of the prince struck Pascal with increasing surprise; he could not believe that his demand concerning Frantz was the only question; however, to influence the determination of the prince by placing before him the consequences of his refusal, he broke the silence, and said:

"Really, monseigneur, your hesitation is incomprehensible! What! by a weak deference to the love affair of a schoolboy, you renounce the certainty of obtaining a crown? For, after all, the duchy whose transfer is offered to you is sovereign and independent. This transfer, my loan only can put it in your power to accept, which, I may say in passing, is not a little flatter-

"'It is no.'"

Original etching by Adrian Marcel.

A.D.MARKET

ing to the good man Pascal. Because, in a word, through the might of his little savings, he can make or unmake sovereigns, he can permit or prevent that pretty commerce where these simpletons of people sell and sell again, transfer and reassign, no more nor less than if it were a park of cattle or sheep. But that does not concern me at all. I am not a politician, but you are, monseigneur, and I do not understand your hesitation. Once more, is it yes? is it no?"

"It is no!" said Madeleine, coming suddenly out of the adjoining room, where she had heard the preceding conversation, notwithstanding the precautions of the prince.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE archduke, at the unexpected appearance of the Marquise de Miranda, shared the surprise of M. Pascal, who looked at Madeleine with amazement, supposing her a guest of the palace, for she had taken off her hat, and her singular beauty shone in all its splendour. The shadow thrown by the rim of her hat, which hid a part of her forehead and cheeks, was no longer there, and the bright light of broad day, heightening the transparent purity of her dark, pale complexion, gilded the light curls of her magnificent blond hair, and gave to the azure of her large eyes, with long black eyebrows, that sparkling clearness that the rays of the sun give to the blue of a tranquil sea. Madeleine, her cheek slightly flushed by the indignation which this odious project of Pascal had aroused, her glance animated, her nostrils dilating, her head proudly thrown back on her slender, beautiful neck, advanced to the middle of the parlour, and, addressing the financier, repeated the words:

"No, the prince will not accept the condition which you have the audacity to impose upon him, monsieur."

"Madame!" stammered M. Pascal, feeling his usual effrontery forsaking him, and recoiling, intimidated, pained, and charmed at the same time, "I do not know who you are, I do not know by what right you —"

"Come, monseigneur," continued the marquise, addressing the archduke, "resume your dignity, not as a prince, but as a man; receive the humiliating condition which he imposes on you with the contempt which it deserves. Great God! at what price would you buy an

increase of power? What! You would have the courage to pick up your sovereign crown at the feet of this man? It would defile your brow! But a man of courage would not have endured the thousandth part of the outrages which you have just brooked, monseigneur. And you a prince! You so proud! You belong to those who believe themselves of a race superior to the vulgar herd. And so for your humble courtiers, your base flatterers, your intimidated followers, you have only haughtiness, and before M. Pascal you abase your sovereign pride! And this, then, is the power of money!" added Madeleine, with increasing exaltation, hurling the words at the financier with a gesture of crushing disdain, "you bow before this man! God have mercy! This is to-day the king of kings! Think of it, prince, think then that what makes the power and the insolence of this man is your ambition. Come, monseigneur, instead of buying by a shameful degradation the fragile plaything of a sovereign rank, renounce this poor vanity, retake your rights as a man of courage, and you will be able to drive this man away ignominiously, who treats you more insolently than you have ever treated the meanest of your poor vassals."

Pascal, since his accession of fortune, was accustomed to a despotic domination as well as to the timid deference of those whose fate he held in his hands; judge, then, of his violent shock, of his rage, in hearing himself thus addressed by the most attractive, if not the most beautiful woman he had ever met. Picture his exasperation as he thought he must, doubtless, renounce the hope of marrying Antonine, and lose besides the profit of the ducal loan, an excellent investment for him; so he cried, with a threatening air:

"Madame, take care; this power of money, which you treat so contemptuously, is able to command many resources for the service of revenge. Take care!"

"Thank God! the threat is good, and it frightens me

very much," said Madeleine, with a burst of sarcastic laughter, stopping by a gesture the prince, who took a quick step toward Pascal. "Your power is great, do you say, Sir Strong-box! It is true money is an immense power. I have seen at Frankfort a little old man, who said in 1830 to two or three furious kings, 'You wish to make war on France; it does not suit me or my family, and I will not give you the money to pay your troops;' and there was no war. This good old man, a hundred times richer than you, M. Pascal, occupied the humble house of his father and lived upon little, while his beneficent name is inscribed on twenty splendid monuments of public usefulness. He is called the 'king of the people,' and his name is blessed as much as yours is shamed and hissed, M. Pascal! For your reputation as a true and honest man is as well known to the foreigner as in France. Certainly, oh, you are known, M. Pascal, too well known, because you do not imagine how much your delicacy, your scrupulous probity, is appreciated! And what is the object of universal consideration, the honourable course, by which you have made your immense fortune? All that has given you a very wide-spread reputation, M. Pascal, and I am happy to declare it under present circumstances."

"Madame," replied Pascal, with an icy calmness more terrible than his anger, "you know many things, but you do not know the man whom you provoke. You are ignorant of what this man, this Strong-box as you call him, can do."

The prince made a threatening gesture which Madeleine again checked, then, shrugging her shoulders, she continued:

"What I do know, M. Pascal, is that, notwithstanding your audacity, your impudence, or your strong-box, you will never marry Mlle. Antonine Hubert, who will be betrothed to-morrow to Count Frantz de Neuberg, as monseigneur can assure you."

And the marquise, without waiting for the reply of Pascal, made a half-mocking bow and returned to the adjoining chamber. Excited by the generous indignation of Madeleine's words, more and more subjugated by her beauty, which had just appeared to him under a new light, the archduke, feeling all the bitterness, all the anger accumulated by the many insolences of Pascal, revive in his heart, experienced the joy of the slave at last freed from a detested yoke. At the impassioned voice of the young woman the wicked soul of this prince, hardened by the pride of race, frozen by the atmosphere of mute adulation in which he had always lived, had at least some noble impulses, and the blush of shame covered the brow of this haughty man as he realised to what a state of abjection he had descended to gain the favour of M. Pascal.

The financier, no longer intimidated or handicapped by the presence of the marquise, felt his audacity spring up again, and, turning abruptly to the prince, he said, with the habitual brutal sarcasm in which was mingled a jealous hatred to see the archduke in possession of so beautiful a mistress, — for such at least was Pascal's belief:

"Zounds! I am no longer astonished, monseigneur, at having stood so long like a crane on one foot in your antechamber. You were, I see, occupied with fine company. I am a fine judge and I compliment your taste; but men like us are not under petticoat government, and I think you know your interests too well to renounce my loan and take seriously the words you have just heard, and which I shall not forget, because I — I am sorry for you, monseigneur," added Pascal, whose rage redoubled his effrontery, — "in spite of her beautiful eyes, I must have revenge for the outrages of this too adorable person."

"M. Pascal," said the prince, triumphant at the thought of avenging himself, "M. Pascal!" and with a

significant gesture he showed him the door; "leave this room, and never set your foot here again!"

"Monseigneur, these words —"

"M. Pascal," repeated the prince, in a louder voice, reaching his hand to the bell-cord, "go out of this room instantly, or I will have you put out."

There is ordinarily so much cowardice in insolence, so much baseness in avarice, that M. Pascal, overwhelmed at the prospect of the destruction of his hopes as well as the loss of his profit on the loan, repented too late his brutality, and, becoming as abject as he had been arrogant, said to the prince, in a pitiful voice:

"Monseigneur, I was jesting. I thought your Highness, in deigning to allow me to talk frankly, would be amused at my whims; that is why I permitted myself to say such improper things. Can your Highness suppose that I would dare cherish the least resentment for the pleasantries this charming lady addressed to me? I am too gallant, too much of a French knight for that. I will even ask your Highness, in case, as I hope, the loan takes place, to offer to this respectable lady what we men of the strong-box, as she so amusingly called us just now, call pin-money for her toilet, — a few rolls of a thousand louis. Ladies always have some little purchases to make, and —"

"M. Pascal," said the prince, who enjoyed this humiliation which he had not the courage to inflict on Pascal, "you are a miserable scoundrel. Go out!"

"Ah, so, monseigneur! Do you mean seriously to treat me in this way?" cried Pascal.

The prince without replying rang vigorously; an officer entered.

"You see that man," said the archduke, indicating Pascal by a gesture; "look at him."

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Do you know his name?"

"Yes, monseigneur; it is M. Pascal."

"Would you recognise him again?"

"Perfectly, monseigneur."

"Very well. Conduct this man to the door of the vestibule, and if he ever has the impudence to present himself here, drive him away in disgrace."

"We will not fail to do it, monseigneur," replied the officer, who with his comrades had endured the insolence of M. Pascal.

Our hero, realising the ruin of his hopes, and having no longer a point to gain, recovered his audacity, held up his head and said to the prince, who, sufficiently avenged, was eager to join Madeleine in the adjoining chamber:

"Wait, M. archduke, the courage and baseness of both of us are of the same feather, — the other day I was strong for reason of your cowardice, as now you are strong for reason of mine. The only brave person here is that damned woman with the black eyebrows and blond hair; but I will have my revenge on her and on you!"

The prince, angered at being thus addressed in the presence of one of his subordinates, became purple, and stamped his foot in fury.

"Will you go out, sir?" cried the officer, putting his hand on the hilt of his sword, as a threat to M. Pascal. "Out of here, or, if not — "

"Softly, M. fighter," replied Pascal, coolly, as he retired, "softly, sir, they do not cut up people with a sword here, you see! And we are in France, you see! And we have, you see, some good little commissaries of police who receive the complaints of an honest citizen who is maltreated."

M. Pascal went out of the palace steeped in rancour, devoured with hate, bursting with rage. He thought of his thwarted scheme for usury, his disappointed love, and he could not banish from his thoughts the pale and glowing face of Madeleine, who, far from making him forget the virginal purity of Antonine's beauty, seemed

to recall her more forcibly to his memory, — the two perfect, yet dissimilar, types heightening the charms of each by contrast.

"Man is a strange animal. I feel within me all the instincts of the tiger," said Pascal to himself, as he slowly walked down the street of the Faubourg St. Honoré, with both hands plunged in the pockets of his trousers. "No," added he, continuing to walk with his head down, and his eyes fixed mechanically on the pavement, "it is not necessary to say that for fear of rendering the envy they bear us millionaires less cruel, less bitter to those who feel it, because, fortunately, those who envy us suffer the torments of the damned for every joy they suppose we have. Yet, indeed, it is a fact, — here I am at this hour, with a purse which can provide me with every pleasure permitted or forbidden that ever a man was allowed to dream! I am still young, I am not a fool, I am full of strength and health, free as a bird, the earth is open to me. I can obtain the most exquisite of all the country offers. I can lead the life of a sybarite in Paris, London, Vienna, Naples, or Constantinople; I can be a prince, duke, or marquis, and covered with insignia; I can have this evening the most beautiful and coveted actresses in Paris; I can have every day a feast of Lucullus, and have myself drawn by the finest horses in Paris; I could even in one month, by taking a splendid hôtel, as many knaves and imbeciles do, surround myself with the élite of Paris and of Europe, — even this so-called king, whom I failed to consecrate with the holy vial of the Bank of France, this archduke whom I have just left, has licked my feet. Ah, well, my word of honour!" added M. Pascal, mentally, gnashing his teeth, "I wager there is not a person in the world who suffers as I do this moment. I was in paradise when, as a drudge, I cleaned the shoes of my old rascal usurer in the province. Fortunately, not to masticate empty, I can always, while waiting for better

morsels, chew a little on Dutertre. Let us run to the house of my bailiff."

The archduke, after the departure of the financier, hastened, as we have said, to find the Marquise de Miranda, but, to his great astonishment, she was not in the next room.

As this chamber had no other egress than through the study, the prince asked the officers if they had seen the person to whom he had given audience pass. They replied that the lady had come out of the parlour, and had left the palace a little while before the departure of M. Pascal.

Madeleine had really gone away, although it was her first intention to wait for the prince after the conclusion of his interview with M. Pascal.

This is why the marquise did not keep her first resolution.

She reëntered the parlour, after having treated M. Pascal as he well deserved, when, looking into the garden by chance, she saw Frantz, who had asked the favour of a turn in the park, accompanied by Major Butler.

At the sight of Frantz, Madeleine stood petrified with astonishment. She recognised her blond archangel, the object of that ideal and only passion which she had confessed to Sophie Dutertre.

CHAPTER XIX.

MADELEINE did not doubt that the hero of the duel of which she had been an invisible witness, her blond archangel, and the ideal of her passion, Frantz, and the lover of Antonine, were one and the same person.

At this sudden discovery the marquise felt a profound agitation. Until then, this love, surrounded with the mystery of the unknown, this vague and charming love which seemed like the memory of a sweet dream, had sufficed to fill her heart in the midst of the perturbations of her life, rendered so fantastic by the calm of her own indifference and the foolish transport that she involuntarily inspired in others.

It had never occurred to Madeleine that her ideal could be in love with another woman, or, rather, her thought had never rested on this doubt; for her, this radiant archangel was provided with beautiful wings, which might carry him away before all eyes into the infinite plains of ether. Incessantly besieged by lovers, by no means platonic, she experienced a joy, an ineffable moral repose, in lifting herself into immaterial regions, where her charmed and dazzled eyes saw her ideal hovering. But suddenly reality cut the wings of the archangel, and, fallen from his celestial sphere, he was no more than a handsome young man, in love with a pretty girl of fifteen, who adored him.

At this discovery, Madeleine could not repress a sort of sadness, or, rather, of sweet melancholy like that which follows the awakening from an enchanted dream, for to experience the tortures of jealousy, would be to

love carnally. In short, if Frantz had almost always occupied the thought of Madeleine, he had never had part in her life; it only concerned her, then, to break the thousand ties that habit, sympathy, and confidence had rendered so dear. Nevertheless, she felt herself a prey to a growing disquietude, to painful presentiments which she could not explain to herself. Suddenly she started, and said:

"If fate should order that this strange charm that I exercise on almost all who approach me should also act upon Frantz, if I, too, should share his feeling on seeing the only man who has ever occupied my heart and my thought!"

Then, trying to reassure herself by an appeal to her humility, Madeleine said:

"No, no; Frantz loves Antonine too much, it is his first love; the purity, the sincerity of this love will protect him. He will have for me that coldness which I have for all. Yes, and who can say that my pride, my self-esteem will not revolt from the coldness of Frantz? Who can tell me that, forgetting the duties of sacred friendship, almost maternal, toward Antonine, I may not employ all the resources of my mind and all my power of seduction to conquer Frantz? Oh, no, that would be odious, and then I deceive myself again, Frantz loves Antonine too much. Alas! the husband of Sophie loves her tenderly, too, and I fear that—"

These reflections of the marquise were interrupted by the sound of the archduke's voice as he ordered Pascal to go out; listening to this discussion, she said to herself:

"After he has put this man out, the prince will come in here. I must attend to what is most urgent."

Drawing a memorandum-book from her pocket, the marquise detached one of the leaflets, wrote a few lines with a pencil, folded the paper, and closed it firmly by means of a pin. After writing the address, "For the

prince," she laid the note where it could be seen on a marble table in the middle of the parlour, put on her hat, and went out, as we have said, a little before the departure of M. Pascal.

While the archduke, astonished and disappointed not to find the marquise, was opening with inexpressible anguish the note she had left, she was on her way to the home of Antonine, where Sophie Dutertre was also expected.

Upon her arrival at the house of President Hubert, introduced in a modest parlour, the marquise was received by Sophie Dutertre, who, running to her, asked, anxiously:

"Ah, well, Madeleine, have you seen the prince?"

"Yes, and I have good hope."

"Will it be possible?"

"Possible; yes, my dear Sophie, but that is all. I do not wish to excite foolish hope in the heart of this poor child. Where is she?"

"With her uncle. Happily, the crisis of this morning appeared to leave results more and more satisfactory. The physician has just said that, if the present condition continues, M. Hubert will perhaps be out of danger this evening."

"Tell me, Sophie, do you think M. Hubert is in a state to receive a visitor?"

"From whom?"

"From a certain person. I cannot tell you more now."

"I think so; because one of his friends has just seen him. Only the physician advised him not to stay too long, as the invalid might become fatigued."

"That suits marvellously. And poor little Antonine! She must be in mortal uneasiness."

"Poor dear child! She is to be pitied. It is such an innocent sorrow, and at the same time so desperate, that my own heart is almost broken. Indeed, Madeleine, I

am sure she will die of grief if she must give up Frantz. Ah, death is preferable to some kinds of suffering," added Sophie, with an accent so profoundly sad that the tears rose to her eyes; then, drying them, she added, "Yes, but when one has children, one must live."

Madeleine was so impressed by the tone of Madame Dutertre, by her pallor that she had not observed before, and by the tears that she saw her shed, that she said to her:

"My God! Sophie, what is the matter, pray? Why these painful words? Why these tears? Yesterday I left you calm and happy, except, as you told me, the concern occasioned by your husband's business. Is there anything new to-day?"

"No, I — think — not," replied Sophie Dutertre, with hesitation. "But since yesterday — my husband's business concerns me less than —"

"Go on."

"No, no; I am foolish," replied Madame Dutertre, restraining herself, and seeming to hold back some words ready to escape; "but let us not talk of me, let us talk of Antonine; I am so touched by the despair of this poor child that one might say her suffering is mine."

"Sophie, you are not telling me the truth."

"I assure you."

"I see you are pale and changed. Yes, since yesterday you have suffered, and suffered much, I am sure."

"No," replied the young woman, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, "you are mistaken."

"Sophie," said Madeleine, quickly taking her friend's hands in her own, "you do not know how much your lack of confidence distresses me; you will make me think you have some complaint against me."

"What are you saying?" cried Sophie, pained by this suspicion, "you are and you will always be my best friend, and I am only afraid of fatiguing you with my grievances."

"Ah, again?" replied the marquise, in a tone of affectionate reproach.

"Forgive me, forgive me, Madeleine; but really, is it not enough to confide to your friends your real sorrows, without saddening them by the confession of vague apprehensions, which are, nevertheless, very distressing?"

"My dear Sophie, tell me these apprehensions."

"Since yesterday,—but, again, I say no, no, I shall appear too foolish to you."

"You appear foolish to me, well, what of it? Speak, I beseech you."

"Ah, well, it seems to me that since yesterday my husband is under the influence of some idea which completely absorbs him."

"Business matters, perhaps?"

"No, oh, no; it is something else, and that is what confounds and alarms me."

"What have you observed?"

"Yesterday, after your departure, it had been agreed that he would undertake two measures of great importance to us. Seeing the hour slip away I went into our chamber, where he had gone to dress himself. I found him with his working apparel on, seated before a table, his head leaning on his hand; he had not heard me enter. 'Charles,' said I to him, 'you forget the hour. You are to go out, you know.' 'Why am I to go out?' he asked. 'My God! why, on urgent business,' and I recalled to his mind the two matters requiring his immediate attention. 'You are right,' said he, 'I had not thought of them again.' 'But what are you thinking of, Charles,' I asked. He blushed, appeared embarrassed, and did not answer a word."

"Perhaps he has some project, some plan he is meditating, that he thinks he ought not to confide to you yet."

"That is possible; yet he has never hidden anything from me, even his most undeveloped plans. No, no,

it is not business affairs which absorb him, because yesterday, instead of talking with his father and me of the state of things, which I confess to you, Madeleine, is graver than I thought, or than I told you, Charles talked of things altogether irrelevant to the subject which concerned us so deeply. And then I did not have the courage to blame him, because he talked to us especially of you."

"Of me? And what did he say?"

"That you had been so full of kindness to him yesterday morning. Then he asked me a thousand little details about you, about your infancy and your life. I replied to him with pleasure, as you can well believe, Madeleine. Then suddenly he relapsed into a gloomy silence, — into a sort of meditation so deep that nothing could draw him out of it, not even the caresses of our children."

At this moment the old servant of M. Hubert entered, with a surprised and busy air, and said to Sophie:

"Madame, Mlle. Antonine is with her uncle, no doubt?"

"Yes, Peter; what is the matter?"

"My God, madame! it has astonished me so that I do not know what to answer."

"What is it, Peter? Explain yourself."

"Well, madame, it is this. There is a strange officer there; probably one belonging to the prince who now occupies the Élysée."

"Well?"

"This officer has a letter which he wishes to deliver himself, he says, into the hands of President Hubert, who must give an answer. I tried in vain to make this officer understand that monsieur was very sick. He assured me that it concerned a very important and very urgent matter, and that he came from his Highness who occupies the Élysée. Then, madame, in my embarrassment I have come to you to ask what I must do."

Madame Dutertre, forgetting her grievance, turned to Madeleine and said, quickly, with the greatest joy:

"Your hope has not been mistaken. This letter from the prince is, perhaps, his consent to this marriage. Poor Antonine, how happy she will be!"

"We must not rejoice too soon, dear Sophie. Let us wait. But do you go and see this officer, who is no doubt an aid of the prince. Tell him that M. Hubert, although a little better, is not able to receive him. Ask the officer to give you the letter, assuring him that you will deliver it at once to M. Hubert, who will send an answer."

"You are right, Madeleine. Come, Peter," said Sophie, going out of the room, accompanied by the old servant.

"I was not mistaken," said the marquise, when she was alone. "Those glances of M. Dutertre. Really it seems a fatality. But I hope," added she, smiling, "in Sophie's interest, and in her husband's, I shall be able to draw some good from this slight infidelity."

Then, reflecting a moment, Madeleine added:

"The prince is remarkably punctual. Is it possible that he has given such immediate attention to the advice contained in my note!"

Antonine came out of her uncle's chamber. At the sight of the marquise the poor child did not dare take another step. She remained motionless, mute and trembling, waiting her fate with mortal agony, for Madeleine had promised that morning to intercede with the prince.

Sophie then entered, holding in her hand the letter which the aide-de-camp had just delivered. She gave it to Antonine, and said:

"Here, my child, carry this letter to your uncle immediately. It is very urgent, very important. He will give you an answer, and I will take it to the man who is waiting."

Antonine took the letter from the hand of Madame Dutertre, throwing a look of anxious curiosity upon her two friends, who exchanged a hopeful, intelligent glance. Their expressions of countenance so impressed Antonine that, addressing the two young women in turn, she said to them:

"Sophie, Madeleine, what is the matter? You look at each other in silence, and what is this letter? Pray, what has happened? My God!"

"Go quick, my child," said Madeleine. "You will find us here when you return."

Antonine, more and more perplexed, ran precipitately to her uncle's room. Madame Dutertre, seeing the marquise bend her head in silent thought, said to her:

"Madeleine, now what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing, my friend. I am thinking of the happiness of poor Antonine, — that is, if my hopes do not deceive me."

"Ah, her happiness she will owe to you! With what enthusiastic delight she and Count Frantz will thank you! Will you not have been their special providence?"

At the name of Frantz, Madeleine started, blushed slightly, and a cloud passed over her brow. Sophie had not time to perceive the emotion of her friend, as Antonine rushed suddenly out of the adjoining chamber, her charming face radiant with an expression of joy and surprise impossible to describe. Then, without uttering a word, she threw herself on Madeleine's neck; but her emotion was excessive; she suddenly turned pale, and the two friends were obliged to support her.

"God be praised!" said Sophie, "for, in spite of your pallor and agitation, my poor Antonine, I am certain you have good news."

"Do not tremble so, dear child," said Madeleine, in her turn. "Recover yourself! Calm yourself!"

"Oh, if you only knew!" murmured the young girl. "No, no, I cannot believe it yet."

The Marquise de Miranda, taking Antonine's hands affectionately in her own, said to her:

"You must always believe in happiness, my child. But come now, explain what you mean."

"Just now," the young girl went on to say, with a voice broken by tears of joy, "I carried the letter to my uncle. He said to me: 'Antonine, my sight is very weak; read this letter to me, please.' Then I broke the seal of the envelope; I did not know why my heart beat with such violence, but it palpitated so I felt sick. Wait, it is beating now," added the young girl, putting her hand on her side, as if she would restrain the rapid pulsations which interrupted her narrative. Then she continued:

"I then read the letter; there was — Oh, I have not forgotten a single word of it.

"'MONSIEUR PRESIDENT HUBERT: — I pray you, notwithstanding your condition of illness, to grant me at once, if it is possible, a moment of conversation upon a most urgent and important subject.

"'Your affectionate,

"'LEOPOLD MAXIMILIAN.'

"'But,' said my uncle, sitting up in bed, 'this is the name of the prince who now occupies the Élysée, is it not?' 'I — I — think — it is, uncle,' I replied. 'What can he wish with me?' asked my uncle. 'I do not know,' said I, trembling and blushing, because I was telling a falsehood, and I reproached myself for not daring to confess my love for Frantz. Then my uncle said, 'It is impossible for me, although I am suffering, to refuse to receive the prince, but I cannot reply to his letter, I am too feeble. Take my place, Antonine, and write this, — recollect it well:

"'MONSEIGNEUR: — My weak condition does not permit me to have the honour of replying to your Highness with my own hand, and I ask another to say to you, monseigneur, that I am at your service.'

"I am going to write this letter now for my uncle," said Antonine, approaching a desk in the parlour. "But, say, Sophie," added the young girl, impulsively, "ought I not to bless Madeleine and thank her on both knees? For if the prince intended to oppose my marriage with Frantz, he would not come to see my uncle, — do you think he would, Sophie? And but for Madeleine, the prince would never have consented to come, would he?"

"Like you, my child, I say that we ought to bless our dear Madeleine," replied Madame Dutertre, pressing the hand of the marquise. "But really, I repeat it again and again, Madeleine, you have a talisman for getting all you want."

"Alas, dear Sophie!" replied the marquise, smiling, "this talisman, if indeed I have one, only serves others; not myself."

While the two friends conversed Antonine had seated herself at the desk, but, at the end of a few moments' vain effort, she was obliged to give up writing; her little hand trembled so violently that she could not hold her pen.

"Let me take your place, my dear child," said Madeleine, who had not taken her eyes off the young girl. "I will write for you."

"Excuse me, Madeleine," said Antonine, yielding her place to the marquise. "It is not my fault, this excitement is too much for me."

"It is the fault of your heart, poor little thing. I understand your emotion," writing President Hubert's reply with a firm hand. "Now," added she, "ring for some one, Antonine, so that this letter can be delivered to the officer of the prince without delay."

The old servant entered, and was instructed to deliver the letter to the officer.

"Now, my little Antonine," said the marquise to the young girl, "there remains one duty to be fulfilled, and I am certain that Sophie will be of my opinion; before the arrival of the prince, you must confess all to your uncle."

"What Madeleine says is very right," replied Sophie. "It would have a bad effect if your uncle should not be prepared for the probable intention of the visit of the prince."

"Your uncle is very kind and considerate, my dear Antonine," added Madeleine, "and he will forgive a lack of confidence, caused principally, I do not doubt, by your timidity."

"You are right, both of you, I know it," said Antonine, "and, besides, I ought not to blush at this confession, for, my God, I loved Frantz without thinking of it, and in spite of myself."

"That is why you should hasten to confide in your uncle, my child, for the prince will not delay his visit. But tell me," added the marquise, "because, for reasons of my own, I do not wish to be found here when the prince arrives, can I not enter your chamber from this parlour?"

"The corridor into which this door opens," replied Antonine, "leads to my chamber; Sophie knows the way."

"Certainly, I will conduct you, Madeleine," replied Sophie, rising with the marquise, who, kissing Antonine tenderly on the forehead, said to her as she pointed to the door of her uncle's chamber, "Go quick, my dear little one, the moments are precious."

The young girl threw a glance of affectionate gratitude on the two friends, who, leaving the parlour, followed the corridor on their way to Antonine's chamber, when they saw the old servant coming.

He approached and said to Sophie:

"Madame, M. Dutertre wishes to speak to you this moment."

"My husband! where is he?"

"Below, madame, in a carriage at the door; he told the porter to order me to ask you to come down without delay."

"That is strange! Why did he not come up?" said Sophie, looking at her friend.

"M. Dutertre has something to say to you, madame," said Peter.

Madame Dutertre, not a little disquieted, followed him, as she said to the marquise, —

"I shall return immediately, my friend, for I am eager to know the result of the prince's visit to M. Hubert."

Madeleine was left alone.

"I did well to hurry," thought she, with a sort of bitterness. "I did well to yield to my first instinct of generosity; to-morrow it would have been too late. I would not, perhaps, have had the courage to sacrifice myself to Antonine. How strange it is! An hour ago, in thinking of Frantz and her, I had not a feeling of jealousy or pain, and only a sweet melancholy, but now by degrees my heart is contracted and filled with sorrow, and this moment I suffer — oh, yes, how I suffer!"

The abrupt entrance of Sophie interrupted the reflections of the marquise, and she guessed that some great misfortune had happened by the frightened, almost wild, expression of Madame Dutertre, who said to her, in a short, panting voice:

"Madeleine, you have offered me aid, and now I accept it!"

"Great God! Sophie, what is the matter?"

"Our condition is desperate."

"Do explain."

"To-morrow, this evening, perhaps, Charles will be arrested."

"Your husband?"

"Arrested, I say; oh, my God!"

"But what for? What is it?"

"That monster of wickedness, whom we thought our benefactor, M. Pascal, has —"

"M. Pascal!"

"Yes, yesterday — I did not dare — I have not told you all, but —"

"M. Pascal!" interrupted Madeleine.

"Our fate is in the hands of that pitiless man; he can, and he wishes to reduce us to the last degree of misery. My God! what will become of us? What will become of our children and the father of my husband? What will become of us all? Oh, it is horrible! It is horrible!"

"M. Pascal!" said the marquise, with restrained indignation, "the wretch! Oh, yes, I read it in his face; I have seen his insolence and meanness — such a man would be without pity."

"You are acquainted with him?"

"This morning I met him at the palace with the prince. Ah, now I regret having yielded to the anger, the contempt, which this man inspired in me. Why did you not tell me sooner? It is a great misfortune that you did not, Sophie, a great misfortune."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, no matter. There is no use in going back to the past. But let us see, Sophie, my friend, do not allow yourself to despond, exaggerate nothing and tell me all, and we will find some way of escaping the blow which threatens you."

"It is impossible; all that I come to ask in the name of Charles, in the name of my children, is that —"

"Let me interrupt you. Why do you say it is impossible to prevent this disaster?"

"M. Pascal is relentless."

"That may be, but what is your position toward him?"

"A year ago my husband found himself, like so many other manufacturers, in an embarrassed position. M. Pascal offered his services to us. Charles, deceived by fair appearances, accepted. It would be too long to explain to you by what a train of affairs Charles, trusting the promises of M. Pascal, soon discovered that he was absolutely dependent on this man, who could any day recall more than a hundred thousand crowns, — that is to say, could ruin our business and plunge us in misery. At last that day has come, and M. Pascal, strong in this terrible power, places my husband and myself in the alternative of submitting to this ruin or consenting to two unworthy deeds he imposes upon us."

"The wretch! The infamous wretch!"

"Yesterday, when you arrived, he had just made known to us his intentions. We answered according to our hearts and our honour; he swore to revenge himself on us and to-day he has kept his word. We are lost, I tell you; he claims, too, that by reason of some authority, he will put Charles in prison temporarily. My idea, above everything else, is to save my husband from prison, but he refuses to escape, saying it is only a decoy, that he has nothing to fear, and that he —"

Madeleine, who had remained silent and thoughtful for some time, again interrupted her friend, and said to her:

"What would be necessary to free you from all fear of M. Pascal?"

"To reimburse him."

"And what does your husband owe him?"

"More than a hundred thousand crowns, our factory as security, but once deprived of our property we would possess nothing in the world. My husband would be declared a bankrupt, and our future would be hopeless."

"And is there absolutely no other way of escaping M. Pascal than by immediate repayment?"

"There is one on which my husband had always relied, resting on the word of this wicked man."

"And what is that way?"

"To give Charles ten years to pay off the debt."

"And suppose you had that assurance?"

"Alas! we would be saved, but M. Pascal wishes to have his revenge, and he will never consent to give us any means of salvation."

This sad conversation was interrupted by Antonine, who, beaming with joy, ran into the room, saying:

"Oh, Madeleine! come! come!"

"What is it, my child? Some happy news, I know it by your radiant countenance."

"Ah, dear friends," said the young girl, "all my fear is that I will not be able to bear so much happiness! My uncle and the prince consent to all, and the prince, — oh, he was so kind, so fatherly to me, for he wanted me to take part in his conversation with my uncle, and he even asked my pardon for the grief he had caused me in opposing our marriage. 'My only excuse,' said he, with the greatest tenderness, 'is, Mlle. Antonine, that I did not know you. Madame Marquise de Miranda began my conversion, and you have finished it, and since she is here, you say, have the goodness to let her know that I would like to thank her before you for having put me in the way of repairing the wrong I have done you.' Were not those noble, touching words!" added the young girl. "Oh, come, Madeleine, come, my benefactress, my sister, my mother, you to whom Frantz and I will owe our happiness. And you come too, Sophie," added Antonine, taking Madame Dutertre by the hand, "are you not also a sharer in my happiness as you have been in my confidence and my despair?"

"My dear child," said Madame Dutertre, trying to disguise her trouble, "I need not tell you that I share

your joy; but the presence of the prince would embarrass me, and besides, as I was telling Madeleine just now, I must return home. I cannot leave my children alone too long. Come, embrace me, Antonine, your happiness is assured; that thought will be sweet to me, and if I have some sorrow, believe me, it will help me to bear it. Good-bye. If you have anything new to tell me, come to see me to-morrow morning."

"Sophie," said the marquise, in a low but firm voice to her friend, "courage and hope! Do not let your husband go away; wait for me at your house to-morrow, all the morning."

"What do you mean?"

"I cannot explain more, only let Antonine's experience give you a little confidence. This morning she was in despair, now you see her radiant with happiness."

"Yes, thanks to you."

"Come, now, embrace me once more; courage and hope."

Then, approaching Antonine, Madeleine said to her:

"Now, my child, go back to the prince."

The young girl and the marquise left Madame Dutertre, who, yielding in spite of herself to the conviction which seemed to ring from Madeleine's words, returned to her dwelling with a ray of hope. The prince waited for Madeleine in the parlour of President Hubert; he saluted her respectfully, and said to her, with that ceremonious formality which Antonine's presence imposed:

"I had it in my heart, marquise, to thank you for the great service you have rendered me. You have put it in my power to appreciate Mlle. Hubert as she deserves to be; the happiness of my godson Frantz is for ever assured. I have agreed with M. President Hubert, who willingly consents to it, that to-morrow morning the betrothal of Frantz and Mlle. Hubert will take place according to the German custom, that is to say, that I and President Hubert will sign, under penalty of perjury

and infidelity, the contract of marriage which Frantz and mademoiselle will sign under the same conditions."

"Since you have said to Antonine, monseigneur, that I have put you in the way of truth, Antonine is under obligation to prove to you all the good that I have told you of her."

"I have a favour to ask of you, marquise," continued the prince, drawing from his pocket a letter and presenting it to Madeleine. "You are acquainted with the family of Colonel Pernetti?"

"Very well, monseigneur."

"Then do me the kindness to have this letter delivered to the colonel, after you have taken knowledge of its contents. I am certain," added the archduke, emphasising his last words, "that you will have as much pleasure in sending this letter as he to whom it is addressed will have pleasure in receiving it."

"I do not doubt it, monseigneur, and I here renew my very sincere thanks," said the marquise, making a ceremonious curtsey.

"To-morrow, Mlle. Antonine," said the prince to the young girl, "I am going to break the good news very gently to my poor Frantz, for fear he may be overcome by his emotion; but I am certain when he knows all he, like you, will forgive me for the grief I have caused him."

And, after having again formally saluted Antonine and the marquise, with whom he exchanged a look of intelligence, the prince returned to the Élysée-Bourbon.

The next day at ten o'clock Madeleine entered a carriage, and was conducted first to the office of a notary, and then to the house of M. Pascal.

CHAPTER XX.

M. PASCAL lived alone on the ground floor of a house situated in the new quarter St. Georges, and opening on the street. A private entrance was reserved for the counting-room of the financier, which was managed by a confidential clerk, assisted by a young deputy who attended to the writing. Here M. Pascal continued to make very valuable discounts.

The principal entrance of his dwelling, preceded by a vestibule, led to an antechamber and other rooms. This apartment, without any luxury, was, nevertheless, comfortable; a valet for the interior and a lad of fifteen years for errands sufficed for the service of M. Pascal, a man who never compensated for his immense wealth by abundant expenditure, or indulgence in those luxuries which support labour and art.

This morning, at half-past nine, M. Pascal, dressed in his morning gown, was walking up and down the floor of his office with great agitation; his night had been one of long and feverish sleeplessness. A well-paid spy, employed for two days to observe what was taking place in the home of Mlle. Antonine, had reported to M. Pascal the visit of the prince to President Hubert.

This prompt and significant step left no doubt in the mind of the financier concerning his own plans in connection with the young girl; this cruel disappointment was complicated with other resentments: first, rage at the recognition of the truth that, notwithstanding his millions, his will, obstinate as it was, was obliged to submit before impossibilities, all the more painful because

he had believed himself at the very door of success. That was not all. If he had no love for Antonine, in the noblest acceptation of the word, he did feel for this child, so lovely and charming, an ardent passion, ephemeral, perhaps, but of extreme intensity as long as it lasted; and so, with a sort of ferocious egotism, he reasoned with himself:

"I would like to possess that little girl at any price. I will marry her if I must, and when I am tired of her an annuity of twelve or fifteen thousand francs will rid me of her. I am rich enough to gratify myself in that caprice."

All this, however detestable, was, from the standpoint of society as it existed, perfectly possible and legal, and it was, we repeat, that possibility which rendered his want of success so bitter to M. Pascal. Another thing still: what he felt for Antonine being, after all, only a sensual desire, did not tolerate the exclusive preference of pure love; so that, in his passionate longing for this young girl of innocent and virginal beauty, he had not been less strongly impressed by the provoking charms of Madeleine, and, by a refinement of sensuality which aggravated his torture, M. Pascal had all night evoked, by his inflamed imagination, the contrasting loveliness of these two beautiful creatures.

And at this hour in which we see him M. Pascal was a prey to the same torment.

"Curses on me!" said he, promenading with a feverish and unequal step. "Why did I ever see that damned blonde woman with the black eyebrows, blue eyes, pale complexion, impudent face, and provoking figure? She seems to me more attractive even than that little girl hardly grown. Curses on me! will these two faces always pursue me? or, rather, will my disordered mind always evoke them? Misery! have I not been fool enough, brute enough? I do not know how, but the thing was so easy, so practical, that is what makes me furious.

Surely, rich as I am, I ought to be able to marry this little girl and have the other for a mistress, because I do not doubt she is the mistress of that archduke, confound him! and I defy him to give her as much money as I would have given her. Yes, yes," continued he, clenching his fists in excess of rage, "I am becoming a fool, a furious fool, but I did not ask to have the Empress of Russia for a mistress, or to marry the daughter of the Queen of England or any other queen. What did I wish? To marry a little citizen, niece of an old magistrate who has not a cent. Are there not thousands of such marriages? And I could not succeed! and I have thirty millions! Misery! my fortune is to fine purpose, not to take away a mistress from this automaton German prince! After all, she only loves him for his money. He is nearly forty; he is as proud as a peacock, stupid as a goose, and cold as an icicle. I am younger than he, not any uglier, and if he is an archduke, am I not a millionaire? And then I have the advantage of having put him at my feet, for this accursed and insolent woman heard me treat her imbecile prince as a poor creature; she reproached him before me for enduring the humiliations I heaped upon him. She ought to despise that man, and, like all women of her kind, have a weakness for a rough and energetic man who put this crowned, lanky fellow at his feet. She treated me cruelly before him, that is true, but it was to flatter him; we all understand those profligates. Oh, if I could only take this woman away from him, what a triumph! what a revenge! what a consolation for my lost marriage! Consolation? No; for one of these women could not make me forget the other. I do not know if it is my age, but I have never known such tenacity of desire as I feel for this little girl. But no matter, if I could only take his mistress away from this prince, half of my will would be accomplished; and who knows? This woman is acquainted with Antonine; she

seems to have influence over her. Yes, who knows, if once mine, I would not be able by means of money to decide her to— Misery!" cried Pascal, with an explosion of ferocious joy, "what a triumph, to take a wife from this blond youth, and his beautiful mistress from the archduke! If my fortune can do it, it shall be done!"

And our hero, holding up his head, seemed to develop into an attitude of imperious will, while his features took on an expression of satanic joy.

"Come, come," said he, holding his head high; "if I have talked like a fool and an ingrate, money is a beautiful thing." Then stopping to reflect awhile he continued:

"Let us see now, — calmness by all means, — we will undertake the thing well and slowly. My spy will know this evening where the archduke's mistress lives, at least if she lives in the palace, which is not probable. Let me find out where she lives," added he, stroking his chin with a meditative air. "Zounds, I will send to her that old milliner, Madame Doucet. It is the old way and always the best with these actresses and such women, for, after all, the mistress of a prince is no better. She came, her head uncovered, to throw herself unceremoniously into our conversation; she had no discretion to protect. So I cannot have a better go-between, a more suitable one, than old Mother Doucet. I will write to her at once."

M. Pascal was occupied in writing at his desk when his valet entered.

"What is it?" asked the financier, abruptly. "I did not ring."

"Monsieur, it is a lady."

"I have no time."

"She has come for a letter of credit."

"Let her go to the counting-room."

"This lady wishes to speak to M. Pascal."

"Impossible. Let her go to the counting-room."

The valet went out.

Pascal continued to write, but at the end of a few moments the servant returned.

"When will you finish? What is it now?"

"Monsieur, this lady who —"

"Ah, so you are making a jest, are you? I told you to send her to the counting-room!"

"This lady has given me a card and asked me to tell monsieur to read what she has just written at the bottom."

"Well, hand it here. It is insupportable!" said Pascal taking the card, where he read the following:

"*The Marquise de Miranda.*"

Below the name was written with a pencil:

"She had the honour of meeting M. Pascal yesterday at the Élysée-Bourbon, with his Highness, the Archduke Leopold."

If a thunderbolt had fallen at the feet of M. Pascal he could not have been more astonished. He could not believe his eyes, and read the card a second time soliloquising:

"The Marquise de Miranda! She is a marquise, then? Bah! she is a marquise as Lola Montès is a countess — petticoat nobility; but at any rate it is she. She here! in my house at the very moment I was taxing my wits to contrive a meeting with her. Ah, Pascal, my friend Pascal, your star of gold, for a moment hidden, shines at last in all its brilliancy. And she comes here under the pretext of a letter of credit. Come, come, Pascal, my friend, keep calm; one does not find such an opportunity twice in his life. Think now, if you are sly, you can take the mistress of the prince and the wife of the

blond youth in the same net. Ah, how my heart beats! I am sure I must look pale."

"Monsieur, what shall I answer this lady?" asked the valet, astonished at the prolonged silence of his master.

"One minute, you rascal; wait my orders," replied Pascal, abruptly. "Come, keep calm, keep calm," thought he to himself. "Excitement now would lose all, would paralyse my plans. It is a terrible part to play, but having such a fine game at hand, I believe I would blow my brains out with rage if, through awkwardness now, I should lose it."

After another silence, during which he succeeded in mastering his agitation, he said to himself:

"I am calm now. Let her come, I can play a sure game." Then he said aloud to his valet:

"Show the lady in."

The servant went out and soon returned to open the door and announce, "Madame the Marquise de Miranda."

Madeleine, contrary to her custom, was dressed, as she had said to the prince, no longer like a grandmother, but with a dainty elegance which rendered her beauty still more irresistible. A Pamela hat of rice straw, ornamented with ears of corn mingled with corn-flowers, relieved and revealed her face and neck; a new gown of white muslin, also strewn with corn-flowers, delineated the outlines of her incomparable figure, the finished type of refined elegance, the voluptuous flexibility characteristic of Mexican creoles, while her gauze scarf rose and fell in gentle undulations with the tranquil breathing of her marble bosom.

CHAPTER XXI.

PASCAL stood a moment dazzled, fascinated.

He beheld Madeleine a thousand times more beautiful, more attractive, more interesting than the day before. And, although a fine judge, as he had said to the prince, although he had enjoyed and abused all those treasures of beauty, grace, and youth which misery renders tributary to wealth, never in his life had he dreamed of such a creature as Madeleine; and strange, or rather natural to this brutalised man, deprived by satiety of all pleasures, he evoked the same moment the virginal figure of Antonine by the side of the marquise. For him, Venus Aphrodite was perfected by Hebe.

Madeleine, taking advantage of the involuntary silence of Pascal, said in a dry, haughty tone, and without making the slightest allusion to the scene of the day before, notwithstanding the words added to her name on the card:

"Monsieur, I have a letter of credit on you: here it is. I wished to see you in order to arrange some business matters."

This short and disdainful accent disconcerted Pascal; he expected some explanation of the scene of the day before, if not an excuse for it, so he said, stammering:

"What, madame, you come here — only — to learn about this letter of credit?"

"For this letter first, then for something else."

"I suspected it," said Pascal to himself, with a light sigh of relief, "this letter of credit was only a pretext. It is a good sign."

Then he said aloud:

"The letter of credit, madame, is in the hands of my cashier; he has the order to attend to your demand. As to the other thing which brings you, is it, as I hope, personal?"

"Yes."

"Before speaking, madame, permit me to ask you one question."

"What is it?"

"On the card which you have just sent me, madame, you wrote that you had seen me yesterday at the Elysée."

"Well?"

"But you do not seem to recollect our interview."

"I do not comprehend."

"Well," said Pascal, regaining his assurance and thinking that the dryness of Madeleine's tone was assumed for some purpose he did not clearly understand, "let us now, madame marquise, confess, at least, that you treated your humble servant very cruelly yesterday."

"What next?"

"What! you feel no remorse for having been so wicked? You do not regret your unjust anger against me?"

"No."

"Very well, I understand; it was done for effect on this fine man, the archduke," Pascal presumed to say with a smile, hoping in some way to draw Madeleine out of this frozen reserve which had begun to make him uneasy. "It is always very adroit to pretend to feel an interest in the dignity of those we govern, because, between us, — beautiful, adorable, as you are, — you can make of this poor prince all that you wish, but I defy you ever to do so with a man of spirit or a brave man."

"Continue."

"Wait, madame marquise, I have not seen your letter of credit," and Pascal opened it. "I wager it is an

atrocious meanness. Zounds! I was sure of it, — forty thousand francs! What would make a woman like you do with such a beggarly pittance in Paris? Ah! Ah! Oh! — forty thousand francs. Only a German archduke could be capable of such magnificence."

Madeleine had at first listened to Pascal without comprehending him. Soon she saw his meaning: he regarded her as the mistress of the prince and living on his liberality.

A deep blush mounted suddenly to Madeleine's face. Then a moment of reflection calmed her, and for the sake of her projects she permitted Pascal to keep his opinion, and replied, with a half-smile:

"Evidently you do not like the prince."

"I detest him!" cried Pascal, audaciously, encouraged by the smile of the marquise, and thinking to make a master stroke by braving things out. "I abominate this accursed prince, because he possesses an inestimable treasure — that I would like to take away from him even at the cost of all my — "

And Pascal threw an impassioned look on Madeleine, who replied:

"A treasure? I did not think the prince so rich, since he desired to borrow from you, monsieur."

"Eh, madame," said Pascal, in a low, panting voice, "that treasure is you."

"Come, you flatter me, monsieur."

"Listen, madame," replied Pascal, after a moment's silence, "let us come to the point, that is the best method. You are a woman of mind, I am not a fool, we understand each other."

"About what, monsieur?"

"I am going to tell you. If among foreigners I do not pass for a schoolgirl in finances, I am supposed to have a little competency, am I not?"

"You are known to be immensely rich, monsieur."

"I pass then for what I am; I am going to prove it

to you; a million of ready money for the expenses of the establishment, a hundred thousand pounds annuity, a wedding basket, such as the united archdukes of Germany could not pay for with all their little savings, and more, I pay for the house. What do you say to that?"

Madeleine, who did not comprehend him at first, looked at Pascal with an air of astonishment. He continued:

"This liberality amazes you, or perhaps you do not believe it. It appears to you to be too much, does it? I will show you I can indulge myself in that folly. Here is a little note-book which looks like nothing," and he drew it from one of the drawers of his desk. "It is my balance-sheet, and, without understanding finances, you can see that this year my income amounted to twenty-seven millions, five hundred and sixty thousand francs. Now let us suppose that my extravagance costs me the round sum of three millions, there remain twenty-four little millions, which, manipulated as I manipulate them, will bring me in fifteen hundred thousand pounds income, and, as I live admirably well on fifty or sixty thousand francs a year, I gain in three years, with my income alone, the three millions which my folly cost me. I tell you that, marquise, because in these adventures it is well to estimate and prove that one can do all he promises. Now confess that the good man Pascal is worth more than an archduke."

"So you make this offer to me, monsieur?"

"What a question! Come, leave your archduke, give me some promise, and I put in your hand a million in drafts. I will make an act with my notary for the hundred thousand pounds annuity, and if Father Pascal is satisfied, he is not at the end of his rolls."

The financier spoke the truth; he had made these offers sincerely. The increasing admiration he felt at the sight of Madeleine, the pride of taking the mistress of a prince, the vanity of surrounding her, before the eyes of all Paris, with a splendour which would excite

the envy of all, — finally, the abominable hope of inducing the marquise, by means of money, to take Antonine away from Frantz, — all, in his ignominy and in his magnificence, justified his offer to Madeleine.

Recognising from this offer the degree of influence she exercised over Pascal, Madeleine rejoiced in it, and, to obtain further proof of his sincerity, she said, with apparent hesitation:

"Without doubt, monsieur, these propositions are above my poor merit, but — "

"Fifty thousand pounds more annuity, and a charming country-house," cried Pascal. "That is my last word, marquise."

"And this is mine, M. Pascal," said Madeleine, rising and giving the financier a look which made him recoil.

"Listen to me well. You are basely avaricious; your magnificent offer proves, then, the impression I have made on you."

"If this offer is not enough," cried Pascal, clasping his hands, "speak, and — "

"Be silent, I have no need of your money."

"My fortune, if necessary."

"Look at me well, M. Pascal, and if you have ever dared look an honest woman in the face, and know how to read truth on her brow, you will see that I speak the truth. You might put all your fortune there at my feet, and the disdain and disgust you excite in me would be the same."

"Crush me, but let me tell you — "

"Be silent! It has suited me to let you believe a moment that I was the mistress of the prince; first, because I do not care for the esteem of a man of your character, and then, because that would encourage you in your insulting offers."

"But then, why have — "

"Be silent! I had need to know the degree of influ-

ence I possessed over you. I know, and I am going to use it."

"Oh, I ask nothing better, if you wish — "

"I have come here for two reasons; the first, to receive this letter of credit — "

"Instantly, but — "

"I have come for another reason, — to put an end to the infamous abuse you have made of an apparent service, a pretended generosity rendered to the husband of my best friend, M. Charles Dutertre."

"You are acquainted with the Dutertres! ah, I see the trap."

"All means are fair to catch malicious creatures; you are caught."

"Oh, not yet," replied Pascal, gnashing his teeth with rage and despair, for the imperious beauty of Madeleine, increased by her glowing animation, excited his passion to frenzy; "perhaps you triumph too soon, madame."

"You will see."

"We will see," said Pascal, trying to pay off with audacity, in spite of the torture he endured, "we will see."

"This instant, there on that table, you are going to sign a deed, in good form, by which you engage yourself to grant to M. Dutertre the time that you have granted by your verbal promise, to liquidate his debt to you."

"But — "

"As you are capable of deceiving me, and as I understand nothing of business, I have ordered a notary to draw up this deed, so that you have only to sign it."

"This is a pleasantry!"

"The notary has accompanied me, he is waiting in the next room."

"What, have you brought a — "

"One does not come alone into the house of a man like you. You are going to sign this deed instantly."

"For what return?"

"My disdain and contempt, as always."

"Misery! that is violence!"

"It is so."

"You wish to take from me, gratis, my sweetest morsel, — in the very moment when, in the rage which possesses me, no reparation but revenge was left to console me a little! Ah, Madame Dutertre is your best friend! Ah, her tears will be bitter to you! Ah, the sorrows of this family will break your heart! Zounds, that is to the point, and I will have my revenge besides!"

"You refuse?"

"If I refuse? Ah, indeed, madame marquise, do you think me an idiot? And for a woman of mind you have shown yourself very weak in this. You might have caught me by cajolery — entangled by some promise. I was capable of —"

"Come, now, who would stoop so low as to pretend to wish to seduce M. Pascal? You are ordered to repair an injury, you make reparation, and M. Pascal is despised after as before, to-day as yesterday, and to-morrow as to-day."

"Misery! this is enough to make one mad!" cried the financier, astonished, and almost frightened by the tone of conviction with which Madeleine spoke, and he asked himself if she had not discovered some secret rottenness in his life which she intended to use as a weapon. But our hero had been a prudent scoundrel, and soon took heart again after a rapid examination of conscience, and replied:

"Ah, well, madame, here I am ready to obey when you force me to do so. I am waiting."

"It will not be long."

"I am waiting."

"I have seen in your street several lodgings to let. That is nothing extraordinary, I am sure, M. Pascal; but a happy chance has shown me a very pretty apart-

ment on the first floor, not yet engaged, almost opposite your house."

Pascal looked at Madeleine stupidly.

"This apartment I shall take, and shall install myself there to-morrow."

A vague foreboding made the financier start; he turned pale.

Madeleine continued, fixing her burning gaze on the man's eyes:

"At every hour of the day and the night you will know that I am there. You will not be able to go out of your house without passing before my windows, where I shall be often, very often. I am fond of sitting at the window. You will not leave your house, I defy you. An irresistible, fatal charm will draw you back to your punishment every instant. The sight of me will give you torture, and you will seek that sight. Every time you meet my glance, and you will meet it often, you will receive a dagger in your heart, and yet, ambushed behind your curtains, you will watch my every movement."

As she talked, Madeleine had made a step toward Pascal, holding him fascinated, panting under her fixed, burning eyes, from which he could not remove his own.

The marquise continued:

"That is not all. As this lodging is large, Antonine, immediately after her marriage, and Frantz will come to live with me. I do not know, then, my poor M. Pascal, what will become of you."

"Oh, this woman is infernal," murmured the financier.

"Judge, then, the tortures of all sorts that you will have to endure. You must have been deeply smitten with Antonine to wish to marry her; you must have been deeply smitten with me to put your fortune at my feet. Ah, well, not only will you suffer an agonising martyrdom in seeing the two women you have madly desired possessed by others, — for I am a widow and

will remarry, — but you will curse your riches, for every moment of the day will tell you that they have been impotent, and that they will always be impotent to satisfy your ardent desires."

"Leave me!" stammered Pascal, recoiling before Madeleine, who kept him always under her eye. "Leave me! Truly this woman is a demon!"

"Stop, my poor M. Pascal," continued the marquise, "you see I pity you in spite of myself, when I think of your envious rage, your ferocious jealousy, exasperated to frenzy by the constant happiness of Antonine, for you will see us every day, and often in the night. Yes, the season is beautiful, the bright moon charming, and many times in the evening, very late, hidden in the shadow with your eyes fixed on our dwelling, you will see sometimes Antonine and sometimes me with our elbows on the balcony railing, enjoying the cool of the evening, and smiling often, I confess, at M. Pascal, then standing behind some window-blind or peeping from some casement, devouring us with his eyes; often Antonine and Frantz will talk of love by the light of the moon, often I and my future husband will be as delightfully occupied under your eyes."

"Curses!" cried Pascal, losing all control of himself, "she tortures me on burning coals."

"And that is not all," continued the marquise, in a low, almost panting, voice. "At a late hour of the night you will see our windows closed, our curtains discreetly drawn on the feeble light of our alabaster lamps, so sweet and propitious to the voluptuousness of the night." Then the marquise, bursting into peals of laughter, added: "And, my poor M. Pascal, I would not be astonished then if, in your rage and despair, you should become mad and blow your brains out."

"Not without having my revenge, at least," muttered Pascal, wrought to frenzy, and rushing to his desk where he had a loaded pistol.

But Madeleine, who knew she had everything to fear from this man, had, as she slowly approached him, kept him under her eye, and, step by step, had reached the chimney; at the threatening gesture of Pascal she pulled the bell-cord violently.

At the moment Pascal, livid and frightful, turned to face Madeleine, the servant entered hastily, surprised at the loud ringing of the bell.

At the sound of the opening door and the sight of his valet, Pascal came to himself, quickly thrust the hand which held the pistol behind him, and let it fall on the carpet.

The marquise had taken advantage of the interruption to approach the door left open by the servant, and to call in a loud voice to the notary, who, seated in the next room, had also quickly risen at the sudden sound of the bell:

"Monsieur, a thousand pardons for having made you wait so long; do me the favour to enter."

The notary entered.

"Go out," said Pascal, roughly, to his servant.

And the financier wiped his livid brow, which was bathed in a cold sweat.

Madeleine, alone with Pascal and the notary, said to the latter:

"You have, monsieur, prepared the deed relating to M. Charles Dutertre?"

"Yes, madame, there is nothing to do but to approve the document and sign."

"Very well," said the marquise; then, while Pascal, wholly overcome, was leaning on the armchair before his desk, she took a sheet of paper and a pen, and wrote what follows:

"Sign the deed, and, not only will I not live opposite your house, but this evening I will leave Paris, and will not return in a long time. What I promise I will keep."

Having written these lines, she handed the paper to Pascal, and said to the notary:

"I beg your pardon, sir; it concerned a condition relating to the deed that I desire to submit to M. Pascal."

"Certainly, madame," replied the notary, while the financier was reading.

He had hardly concluded his examination of the note, when he said to the notary, in a changed voice, as if he were eager to escape a great danger:

"Let us — finish — this — deed."

"I am going, monsieur, to give you a reading of it before signing," replied the notary, drawing the deed from his pocketbook, and slowly unfolding it.

But M. Pascal snatched it rudely from his hands and said, as if his sight were overcast:

"Where must I sign?"

"Here, monsieur, and approve the document first, but it is customary —"

Pascal wrote the approval of the document with a spasmodic and trembling hand, signed it, threw the pen on the desk, and inclined his head so as not to meet the glance of Madeleine.

"There is no flourish here," said the careful notary.

Pascal made the flourish; the notary took the deed with a surprised, almost frightened look, so sinister and dreadful was the expression of Pascal's face.

The marquise, perfectly cool, took up her letter of credit lying on the desk, and said to the financier:

"As I will have need of all my funds for my journey, monsieur, and as I leave this evening, I am going, if you please, to receive the whole amount of this letter of credit."

"Pass to the counting-room," replied Pascal, mechanically, his eyes wandering and bloodshot; his livid pallor had suddenly turned to a purplish red.

Madeleine preceding the notary, who made a pretext of saluting Pascal in order to look at him again, still

with an air of alarm, went out of the office, shut the door, and said to the servant:

"Where is the counting-room, please?"

"The first door on the left in the court, madame."

The marquise left the parlour when a loud noise was heard in the office of M. Pascal.

It sounded like the fall of a body on the floor.

The servant, leaving Madeleine and the notary at once, ran to his master's room.

The marquise, after having received bank-bills to the amount of her letter of credit, was just about to enter her carriage, accompanied by the notary, when she saw the servant rush out of the gateway with a frightened air.

"What is the matter, my good friend?" asked the notary, "you seem to be alarmed."

"Ah, monsieur, what a pity! my master has just had an attack of apoplexy. I am running for the physician."

And he disappeared, running at the top of his speed.

"I thought," said the notary, addressing Madeleine, "this dear gentleman did not appear to be in his natural condition. Did you not observe the same thing, madame marquise?"

"I thought, like you, there was something peculiar in the countenance of M. Pascal."

"God grant this attack may be nothing serious, madame. So rich a man to die in the vigour of life, that would really be a pity!"

"A great pity indeed! But tell me, monsieur, if you wish, I can take you home in my carriage, and you can deliver to me the deed relating to M. Dutertre; I have need of it."

"Here it is, madame, but I shall not permit you to drive out of your way for me. I am going only two or three steps from here."

"Very well. Have the kindness, then, to take these

forty thousand francs. I wish to have ten thousand for my journey and a letter of credit on Vienna."

"I will attend to it immediately, madame. And when will you need this money?"

"This evening before six o'clock, if you please."

"I will be on time, madame."

The notary bowed respectfully, and Madeleine ordered the coachman to drive directly to the factory of Charles Dutertre.

CHAPTER XXII.

MADELEINE, as we have said, on leaving the house of M. Pascal, went directly to the home of Madame Dutertre, who was alone in her bedchamber when the servant announced the marquise. Sophie, seated in an armchair, seemed a prey to overwhelming despair. At the sight of her friend, she raised her head quickly; her sad face, bathed in tears, was of a deadly pallor.

"Take this, read it, and weep no longer," said Madeleine, tenderly, handing her the deed signed by M. Pascal. "Was I wrong to tell you yesterday to hope?"

"What is this paper?" asked Sophie Dutertre, in surprise, "explain it."

"Yours and your husband's deliverance —"

"Our deliverance?"

"M. Pascal has pledged himself to give your husband all the time needed to pay the debt."

"Can it be true! No, no, such a happiness — Oh, it is impossible!"

"Read, then, and see for yourself, unbeliever."

Sophie rapidly looked over the deed; then, staring at the marquise, she exclaimed:

"That seems like a miracle; I cannot believe my eyes. And how was it done? My God, it must be magic!"

"Perhaps," replied Madeleine, smiling, "who knows?"

"Ah, forgive me, my friend!" cried Sophie, throwing her arms around the neck of the marquise; "my surprise was so great that it paralysed my gratitude. You have rescued us from ruin; we and our children owe

you everything, — happiness, safety, fortune! Oh, you are our guardian angel!"

The expression of Sophie Dutertre's gratitude was sincere.

At the same time, the marquise observed a sort of constraint in the gestures and gaze of her friend. Her countenance did not seem as serene and radiant as she hoped to see it, at the announcement of such welcome news.

Another grief evidently weighed upon Madame Dutertre, so, after a moment's silence, Madeleine, who had been watching her closely, said:

"Sophie, you are hiding something from me; your sorrow is not at an end."

"Can you think so, when, thanks to you, Madeleine, our future is as bright, as assured, as yesterday it was desperate, when — "

"I tell you, my poor Sophie, you still suffer. Your face ought to be radiant with joy, and yet you cannot disguise your grief."

"Could you believe me ungrateful?"

"I believe your poor heart is wounded, yes, and this wound is so deep that it is not even ameliorated by the good news I brought you."

"Madeleine, I implore you, leave me; do not look at me that way! It pains me. Do not question me, but believe, oh, I beseech you, believe that never in all my life will I forget what we owe to you."

And with these words, Madame Dutertre hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

The marquise reflected for some minutes, and then said, with hesitation.

"Sophie, where is your husband?"

The young woman started, blushed, and turned pale by turns, and exclaimed, impulsively, almost with fear:

"You wish to see him, then?"

"Yes."

"I do not know — if he is — this moment in the factory," replied Madame Dutertre, stammering. "But if you wish it, if you insist upon it, I will send for him, so that he may learn from you yourself all that we owe to you."

The marquise shook her head sadly and replied:

"It is not to receive your husband's thanks that I desire to see him, Sophie; it is only to say farewell to him as well as to you."

"Farewell?"

"This evening I leave Paris."

"You are going away!" cried Madame Dutertre, and her tone betrayed a singular mingling of surprise, sadness, and joy.

Neither one of these emotions escaped the penetration of Madeleine. She experienced at first a feeling of pain. Her eyes became moist; then, overcoming her emotion, she said to her friend, smiling, and taking both of Sophie's hands in her own:

"My poor Sophie, you are jealous."

"Madeleine!"

"You are jealous of me, confess it."

"I assure you — "

"Sophie, be frank; to deny it to me would make me think that you believe that I have been intentionally coquetting with your husband, and God knows I have never seen him but once, and in your presence — "

"Madeleine!" cried the young woman, with effusion, no longer able to restrain her tears, "forgive me! This feeling is shameful and unworthy, because I know the lofty nature of your heart, and at this time, too, when you have come to save us — but if you only knew!"

"Yes, my good Sophie, if I knew, but I know nothing. Come now, make me your confession to the end; perhaps it will give me a good idea."

"Madeleine, really I am ashamed; I would never dare."

"Come, what are you afraid of, since I am going away? I am going away this evening."

"Wait, it is that which wounds me and provokes me with myself. Your departure distresses me. I had hoped to see you here every day, for a long time, perhaps, and yet — "

"And yet my departure will deliver you from a cruel apprehension, will it not? But it is very simple, my good Sophie. What have you to reproach yourself for? Since this morning, before seeing you, I had resolved to depart."

"Yes, you say that, brave and generous as you always are."

"Sophie, I have not lied; I repeat to you that this morning, before seeing you, my departure was arranged; but, I beseech you, tell me what causes have aroused your jealousy? That is perhaps important for the tranquillity of your future!"

"Ah, well, yesterday evening Charles returned home worn out with fatigue and worry, and alarmed at the prompt measures threatened by M. Pascal. Notwithstanding these terrible afflictions, he spent the whole time talking of you. Then, I confess, the first suspicion entered my mind as to what degree you controlled his thought. Charles went to bed; I remained quietly seated by his pillow. Soon he fell asleep, exhausted by the painful events of the day. At the end of a few minutes, his sleep, at first tranquil, seemed disturbed; two or three times your name passed his lips, then his features would contract painfully, and he would murmur, as if oppressed by remorse, 'Forgive me, Sophie — forgive — and my children — oh, Sophie.' Then he uttered some unintelligible words, and his repose was no longer broken. That is all that has happened, Madeleine, your name was only uttered by my husband during his sleep, and yet I cannot tell you the frightful evil all this has done me; in vain I tried to learn the cause of

this impression, so deep and so sudden, for Charles had seen you but once, and then hardly a quarter of an hour. No doubt you are beautiful, oh, very beautiful. I cannot be compared with you, I know, yet Charles has always loved me until now." And the young woman wept bitterly.

"Poor, dear Sophie!" said the marquise with tenderness, "calm your fears; he loves you, and will always love you, and you will soon make him forget me."

Madame Dutertre sighed and shook her head sadly. Madeleine continued:

"Believe me, Sophie; it will depend on you to make me forgotten, as it was entirely your own fault that your husband ever thought of me a single instant."

"What do you mean?"

"Just now I provoked your confidence by assuring you that, doubtless, some happy result to you and your husband would be the consequence of it. I was not mistaken."

"Explain, if you please."

"Let us see now. Imagine, dear Sophie, that you are in a confessional," replied Madeleine, smiling, "yes, in the confessional of that great fat abbé, Jolivet, you know, the chaplain of the boarding-school, who put such strange questions to us when we were young girls. So, since that time I have often asked myself why there were not abbesses to confess young girls; but as, without being an abbess, I am a woman," added the marquise, smiling again, "I am going to risk some questions which would have been very tempting to our old confessor. Now, tell me, and do not blush, your husband married you for love, did he not?"

"Alas! yes."

"Well, you need not groan at such a charming recollection."

"Ah, Madeleine, the sadder the present is, the more certain memories tear our hearts."

"The present and the future will all be what you would like to have it. But, answer me, during the first two or three years of your marriage, you loved each other as lovers, did you not? You understand me?"

The young woman looked downwards and blushed.

"Then by degrees, without any diminution of love, that passionate tenderness gave place to a calmer sentiment, that your love for your children has filled with charm and sweetness; and, finally, the two lovers were only two friends united by the dearest and most sacred duties. Is that true?"

"That is true, Madeleine, and if I must say it, sometimes I have regretted these days of first youth and love; but I reproached myself for these regrets, with the thought that perhaps they were incompatible with the serious duties imposed by motherhood."

"Poor Sophie! But, tell me, this coolness, or rather this transformation of married lovers to friends, if you choose, was not sudden, was it? It came insensibly and almost without your perceiving it."

"Practically, yes; but how do you know?"

"One more question, Sophie, dear. In the period of your early love, you and you husband were, I am certain of it, very anxious to please each other. Never could a toilet be fresh or pretty enough. You heightened by painstaking and agreeableness every charm you possessed; indeed, your only thought was to please your husband, to captivate him always, and to keep him always in love. Your Charles, no doubt, preferred some delicate perfume, and your beautiful hair, your garments, exhaled that sweet odour, which, in time of absence, materialises, so to speak, the memory of a beloved woman."

"That is true; we adored the odour of the violet and the iris. That perfume always recalls to me the happy days of our past."

"You see plainly, then. As to your husband, I do

not doubt, he vied with you in the care and elegance and taste of the most trifling details of his toilet. In short, both of you, ardent and passionate, guarded with strictest attention all the delights of your young love. But, alas! from the bosom of this happiness, so easily, so naturally, issued by degrees habit, — that fatal precursor of familiarity, lack of ceremony, neglect of self, habit! — all the more dangerous because it resembles, even so as to be mistaken for it, a sweet and intimate confidence. So, one says: 'I am sure of being loved, what need of this constant care and painstaking? What are these trifles to true love?' So, my good Sophie, there came a day when, entirely absorbed by your tenderness for your children, you no longer occupied yourself in finding out if your hair were arranged becomingly, in a style suited to your pretty face, if your dress hung well or badly from your graceful waist, if your little foot were coquettishly dressed in the morning. Your husband, on his part, absorbed in his work as you were by the cares of maternity, neglected himself, too. Unconsciously, your eyes grew accustomed to the change, scarcely perceiving it; as in the same way, so to speak, people never see each other grow old when they live continually together. And it is true, dear Sophie, that if at this moment you should evoke, by memory, the care, the elegance, and the charms with which you and your husband surrounded yourselves in the beautiful time of your courtship, you would be startled with surprise in comparing the present with the past."

"It is only too true, Madeleine," replied Sophie, throwing a sad, embarrassed look on her careless attire and disordered hair. "Yes, by degrees I have forgotten the art, or, rather, the desire to please my husband. Alas! it is now too late to repent!"

"Too late!" exclaimed the marquise. "Too late! With your twenty-five years, that attractive face, too late! With that enchanting figure, that magnificent hair, those

pearly teeth, those large, tender eyes, that hand of a duchess, and those feet of a child, too late! Let me be your tirewoman for a half-hour, Sophie, and you will see if it is too late to make your husband as passionately in love with you as he ever was."

"Ah, Madeline, you are the only one in the world to give hope to those who have none; nevertheless, the truth of your words frightens me. Alas, alas! You are right. Charles loves me no longer."

"He loves you as much and perhaps even more than in the past, poor foolish child, because you are the wife whose fidelity has been tested, the tender mother of his children; but you are no longer the infatuating mistress of the past, nor has he that tender, passionate love for you he felt in the first days of your wedded bliss. What I say to you, my good Sophie, may be a little harsh, but the good God knows what he has made us. He has created us of immaterial essence. Neither are we all matter, but neither are we all mind. It is true, believe me, that there is something divine in pleasure, but we must guard it, purify it, idealise it. Now, pray pardon this excessive management on my part, as you see that a little appreciation of the sensuous is not too much to awaken a nature benumbed by habit, or else the seductive mistress always has an advantage over the wife; for, after all, Sophie, why should the duties of wife and mother be incompatible with the charms and enticements of the mistress? Why should the father, the husband, not be a charming lover? Yes, my good Sophie, I am going, in a few words, with my usual bluntness, to sum up your position and mine: your husband loves you, but desires you no longer; he does not love me, and he desires me."

Then the marquise, laughing immoderately, added:

"Is it not strange that I, a young lady, alas! with no experience in the question, — for I am like a gourmand without a stomach, who presumes to talk of good cheer, —

is it not strange that I should be giving a lesson to a married woman?"

"Ah, Madeleine," exclaimed Sophie, with effusion, "you have saved us twice to-day, because what my husband feels for you he might have felt for a woman less generous than yourself; and then think of my sorrow, my tears! Oh, you are right, you are right. Charles must see again and find again in his wife the beloved mistress of the past."

The conversation of the two friends was interrupted by the arrival of Antonine.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE conversation of Madeleine and Sophie was interrupted by the arrival of Antonine, who, impetuous as joy, youth, and happiness, entered the room, saying:

"Sophie, I knew yesterday that Madeleine would be here this morning, and I ran in to tell you that — "

"Not a word more, little girl!" gaily replied the marquise, kissing Antonine on the forehead; "we have not a moment to lose; we must be to-day as we used to be in school, waiting-maids for Sophie."

"What do you mean?" said the young woman.

"But, Madeleine," replied Antonine, "I have come to inform you that my contract has been signed by the prince and my uncle, and that — "

"Your contract is signed, my child! That is important and I expected it. You can tell me the rest when we have made our dear Sophie the prettiest and most captivating toilet in the world. It is very important and very urgent."

Then the marquise whispered in the ear of Madame Dutertre:

"Your husband may come at any moment; he must be charmed, fascinated, and he will be."

Then turning to Antonine, Madeleine added:

"Quick, quick, my child; help me to place this table before the window, and we will first arrange Sophie's hair."

"But really, Madeleine," said Madame Dutertre, smiling, for she was awakening in spite of herself to hope and happiness, "you are silly."

"Not so silly," replied the marquise, making Sophie sit down before the toilet-table.

Uncoiling her friend's magnificent hair, she said:

"With such hair, if I were as ugly as a monster, I would make myself attractive in the highest degree; judge for yourself, Sophie. Here, help me, Antonine, this hair is so long and so thick, I cannot hold it all in my hand."

It was a charming sight to see the three friends of such diverse beauty, thus grouped together. The pure face of Antonine expressed an innocent astonishment at this improvised toilet; Sophie, touched, and distressed by the tender recollections of other days, felt under her veil of brown hair her lovely face, sad and pale up to that moment, colour with an involuntary blush; while Madeleine, handling her friend's superb hair with marvellous skill, was making a ravishing coiffure.

"Now," said the marquise to Sophie, "what gown are you going to wear? But now I think of it, they all fit you horribly, and all of them are cut on the same pattern."

"They are, unfortunately," said Sophie, smiling.

"Very well," replied the marquise, "and all are high-necked, I warrant."

"Yes, all are high-necked," replied poor Sophie.

"Better and better," said Madeleine, "so that these dimpled shoulders, these beautiful arms are condemned to perpetual burial! it is deplorable! Let us see, you have at least some elegant morning gown, — some coquettish dressing-gown, — have you not?"

"My morning gowns are all very simple. It is true that formerly —"

"Formerly?"

"I did have some beautiful ones."

"Well, where are they?"

"I thought they were too young for the mother of a family like me," said Sophie, smiling. "So I relegated

them, I believe, to a shelf in that wardrobe with the glass door."

The marquise waited to hear no more; she ran to the wardrobe, which she ransacked, and found two or three very pretty morning gowns of striped taffeta of great beauty. She selected one of deep blue, with straw-coloured stripes; the sleeves open and floating exposed the arms to the elbow, and although it lapped over in front, the gown opened enough to show the neck in the most graceful manner possible.

"Admirable!" exclaimed Madeleine, "this gown is as fresh and beautiful as when it was new. Now I must have some white silk stockings to match these Cendrillon slippers I found in this wardrobe where you have buried your arms, Sophie, as they say of warriors who do not go to battle any more."

"But, my dear Madeleine," said Sophie, "I —"

"There are no 'buts,'" said the marquise, impatiently, "I wish and expect, when your husband enters here, he will think he has gone back five years."

In spite of a feeble resistance, Sophie Dutertre was docile and obedient to the advice and pretty attentions of her friend. Soon, half recumbent on an easy chair, in a languishing attitude, she consented that the marquise should give the finishing touch to the living picture. Finally Madeleine arranged a few curls of the rich brown hair around the neck of dazzling whiteness, lifted the sleeves so as to show the dimpled elbows, opened somewhat the neck of the gown, notwithstanding the chaste scruples of Sophie, and draped the skirt with provoking premeditation, so as to reveal the neatest ankle and prettiest little foot in the world.

It must be said that Sophie was charming, — emotion, hope, expectation, and a vague disquietude, colouring her sweet and attractive face, animated her appearance, and gave a bewitching expression to her features.

Antonine, struck with the wonderful metamorphosis, exclaimed, innocently, clapping her little hands:

"Why, Sophie, I did not know you were as pretty as that!"

"Nor did Sophie know it," replied Madeleine, shrugging her shoulders, "I have exhumed so many attractions."

Just then Madame Dutertre's servant, having knocked at the door, entered, and said to her mistress:

"Monsieur desires to speak to madame. He is in the shop, and wishes to know if madame is at home."

"He knows you are here," whispered Sophie to Madeleine, with a sigh.

"Make him come up," replied the marquise, softly.

"Tell M. Dutertre that I am at home," said Sophie to the servant, who went out.

Madeleine, addressing her friend in a voice full of emotion, as she extended her arms to her, said:

"And now, good-bye, Sophie; tell your husband that he is delivered from M. Pascal."

"You are going already?" said Sophie, with sadness; "when shall I see you again?"

"I do not know, — some day, perhaps. But I hear your husband's step. I leave you."

Then she added, smiling:

"Only I would like to hide behind that curtain and enjoy your triumph."

And making a sign to Antonine to accompany her, she retired behind the curtain which separated the room from the next chamber, just as M. Dutertre entered. For some moments the eyes of Charles wandered as if he were looking for some one he expected to meet; he had not discovered the change in Sophie, who said to him:

"Charles, we are saved, here is the non-suit of M. Pascal."

"Great God! can it be true?" cried Dutertre, looking over the paper his wife had just delivered to him; then,

raising his eyes, he beheld Sophie in her bewitching, coquettish toilet. After a short silence produced by surprise and admiration, he exclaimed:

"Sophie! what do I see? This toilet so charming, so new! Is it to celebrate our day of deliverance?"

"Charles," replied Sophie, smiling and blushing by turns, "this toilet is not new; some years ago, if you remember, you admired me in it."

"If I remember!" cried Dutertre, feeling a thousand tender memories awaken in his mind. "Ah, it was the beautiful time of our ardent love, and this happy time is born again, it exists. I see you again as in the past; your beauty shines in my eyes with a new brilliancy. I do not know what this enchantment is; but this elegance, this grace, this coquetry, your blushes and the sweet perfume of the iris we used to love so much, — all transport me and intoxicate me! Never, no, never, have I seen you more beautiful!" added Dutertre, in a passionate voice, as he kissed Sophie's little hands. "Oh, yes, it is you, it is you, I have found you again, adored mistress of my first love!"

"Now, little girl, I think it is altogether proper that we should retire," whispered Madeleine to Antonine, unable to keep from laughing.

And both, stealing away on tiptoe, left the parlour, the door of which the marquise discreetly closed, and went into the study of M. Dutertre, which opened into the garden.

"Just now, Madeleine," said Antonine to the marquise, "you did not let me finish what I came to tell you."

"Very well, speak, my child."

"Count Frantz is here."

"He here!" said the marquise, starting with a feeling of sudden disappointment. "And why and how is Count Frantz here?"

"Knowing from me that you would be here this morning," said Antonine, "he has come to thank you

for all your kindness to us. He is waiting in the garden, — wait, — there he is!" With these words the young girl pointed to Frantz, who was seated on a bench in the garden.

Madeleine threw a long and last look on her blond archangel, nor could she restrain the tears which rose to her eyes; then, kissing Antonine on the brow, she said, in a slightly altered voice:

"Good-bye, my child."

"Why, Madeleine," exclaimed the young girl, astounded at so abrupt a departure, "will you go away without wishing to see Frantz? Why, that is impossible — but you will —"

The marquise put her finger on her lips as a sign to Antonine to keep silence; then walking away, turning her eyes only once to that side of the garden, she disappeared.

Two hours after, the Marquise de Miranda quit Paris, leaving this note for the archduke:

"MONSEIGNEUR: — I am going to wait for you in Vienna; come and complete your capture of me.

"MADELEINE."

THE END.

THE SEVEN CARDINAL SINS

GLUTTONY

DOCTOR GASTERINI

GLUTTONY.

CHAPTER I.

TOWARD the end of the month of October, 18—, the following conversation occurred in the convent of St. Rosalie, between the mother superior, whose name was Sister Prudence, and a certain Abbé Ledoux, whom perhaps the readers of these recitals will remember.

The abbé had just entered the private parlour of Sister Prudence, a woman about fifty years old, with a pale and serious face and a sharp, penetrating eye.

"Well, dear abbé," said she, "what news from Dom Diégo? When will he arrive?"

"The canon has arrived, my dear sister."

"With his niece?"

"With his niece."

"God be praised! Now, my dear abbé, let us pray Heaven to bless our plans."

"Without doubt, my dear sister, we will pray, but, above all, let us play a sure game, for it will not be easy to win."

"What do you say?"

"The truth. This truth I have learned only this morning, and here it is; give me, I pray you, all your attention."

"I am listening, my dear brother."

"Moreover, that we may better agree, and clearly un-

derstand our position, let us first settle the condition of things in our minds. Two months ago, Rev. Father Benoit, who is engaged in foreign missions, and at present is in Cadiz, wrote to me recommending to my especial consideration Lord Dom Diégo, Canon of Alcantara, who was to sail from Cadiz to France with his niece, Dolores Salcedo."

"Very well, my brother."

"Father Benoit added that he was sufficiently acquainted with the character and disposition of Dolores Salcedo to feel sure that she could be easily persuaded to take the veil, a resolution which would have the approval of her uncle, Dom Diégo."

"And, as she is the only heir of the rich canon, the house which she will enter will be greatly benefited by the fortune she inherits."

"Exactly so, my dear sister. Naturally, I have thought of our convent of Ste. Rosalie for Senora Dolores, and I have spoken to you of these intentions."

"I have adopted them, my dear brother, because, having some experience with young girls, I feel almost sure that I can, by persuasion, guard this innocent dove from the snares of a seductive and corrupt world, and decide her to take the veil in our house. I shall be doing two good works: save a young girl, and turn to the good of the poor riches which, in other hands, would be used for evil; I cannot hesitate."

"Without doubt; but, now, my dear sister, the inconvenient thing is, that this innocent dove has a lover."

"What do you tell me, my brother? What horror! But then, our plans."

"I have just warned you that we must play a sure game."

"And how have you learned this shocking thing, my dear brother?"

"By the majordomo of Dom Diégo, a modest servant

who keeps me informed of everything he can learn about the canon and his niece."

"These instructions are indispensable, my brother, because they enable us to act with intelligence and security. But what ideas has this majordomo given you concerning this unfortunate love, my dear brother?"

"Hear, now, how things have happened. The canon and his niece embarked at Cadiz, on a three-master coming from the Indies, and sailing for Bordeaux. Really, now, how many strange fatalities do occur!"

"What fatalities?"

"In the first place, the name of this vessel on which they embarked was named *Gastronome*."

"Why, what a singular name for a vessel!"

"Less singular than it appears at first, my dear sister, because this vessel, after having carried to the Indies the best unfermented wines of Bordeaux and the south, hams from Bayonne, smoked tongues from Troyes, pastry from Amiens and Strasbourg, tunnies and olives from Marseilles, cheese from Switzerland, preserved fruits from Touraine and Montpellier, etc., came back by the Cape of Good Hope with a cargo of wines from Constance, pepper, cinnamon, cloves, tea, salted meats of Hachar, and other comestibles of the Indies. She was to add to her cargo by taking on at Cadiz a large quantity of Spanish wine, and afterward return to Bordeaux."

"Good God, my brother! what a quantity of wine and food! It is enough to make one shudder. I understand now why the vessel was named the *Gastronome*."

"And you understand at the same time, my sister, why I spoke to you of strange fatalities, and why the Canon Dom Diégo preferred to embark on the *Gastronome*, rather than on any other vessel, without any regard to her destination."

"Please explain yourself, my brother."

"As for that, I ought first to inform you that I myself

was in ignorance before my secret conference with the majordomo on the subject of the canon; the fact is, he is a fabulous, unheard-of glutton."

"Oh, my brother, what a horrible sin!"

"Horrible sin it may be, but do not abuse this sin too much, my dear sister, for, thanks to it, we may perhaps be able to compass our praiseworthy end and win our game."

"And how is that, my brother?"

"I am going to tell you. The canon is an ideal glutton. All his faculties, all his thoughts, are concentrated upon one sole pleasure, — the table; and it seems that at Madrid and at Cadiz his table was absolutely marvellous, because now I remember that my physician, Doctor Gasterini —"

"An abominable atheist! a Sardanapalus!" exclaimed Sister Prudence, interrupting Abbé Ledoux, and raising both hands to heaven. "I have never understood why you receive the medical attentions of such a miscreant!"

"I will tell you that some day, my dear sister, but, believe me, I know what I am doing. Besides, notwithstanding his great age, Doctor Gasterini is still the first physician in Paris, as he is the first glutton in the world; but, as I was saying to you, my sister, I now remember having heard him speak of a Spanish canon's table, — a table which, according to one of the doctor's correspondents in Madrid, was truly remarkable. At that time I was far from suspecting that it was Dom Diégo who was the subject of their correspondence. However, the poor man is a fool, — a man of small ability, and influenced by all those absurd Southern superstitions. So, upon the authority of the majordomo, it will be easy to make this gluttonous canon see the devil in flesh and bones!"

"One moment, my brother. I am not altogether displeased with the canon's foolish superstition."

"Nor I, my sister; on the contrary, it suits me

exactly. That is not all. The canon, thanks to his religion, is not deceived about the grossness of his ruling passion. He knows that gluttony is one of the seven deadly sins. He believes that his sin will send him to hell, yet he has not the courage to resist it; he eats with voluptuousness, and remorse comes only when he is no longer hungry."

"Instead of remorse, he ought to have indigestion, unhappy man!" said Sister Prudence. "That, perhaps, might cure him."

"True, my sister, but that is not the case. However, the canon's life is passed in enjoying and regretting that he has enjoyed; sometimes remorse, aided by superstition, leads him to expect some sudden and terrible punishment from heaven, but when appetite returns remorse is forgotten, and thus has it been a long time with the canon."

"After all, my brother, I think him far less culpable than this Sardanapalus, your Doctor Gasterini, who impudently indulges his appetite without compunction. The canon is, at least, conscious of his sin, and that is something."

"Since the character of the canon is now understood, you will not be astonished that, finding himself at Cadiz, and learning that a ship named the *Gastronome* was about to sail for France, Dom Diégo seized the opportunity to embark on a vessel so happily named, so as to be able, on his arrival at Bordeaux, to purchase several tons of the choicest wines."

"Certainly. I understand that, my dear brother."

"Well, then, Dom Diégo embarked with his niece on board the *Gastronome*. It is impossible to imagine — so the majordomo told me — the quantity of stores, provisions, and refreshments of all sorts with which the canon encumbered the deck of this vessel, — obstructions invariably forbidden by all rules of navigation, — but the commander of this ship, a certain Captain Horace,

miscreant that he is, had only too good reason for ignoring discipline and making himself agreeable to the canon."

"And this reason, my brother?"

"Fascinated by the beauty of the niece, when Dom Diégo came with her to stipulate the terms of his passage, this contemptible captain, suddenly enamoured of Dolores Salcedo, and expecting to profit by opportunities the voyage would offer, granted all that Dom Diégo demanded, in the hope of seeing him embark with his niece."

"What villainy on the part of this captain, my brother!"

"Fortunately, Heaven has punished him for it, and that can save us. Well, the canon and his niece embarked on board the *Gastronome*, laden with all that could tempt or satisfy appetite. Just as they left port a terrible tempest arose, and the safety of the vessel required everything to be thrown into the sea, not only the canon's provisions, but cages of birds and beasts taken aboard for the sustenance of the passengers. This squall, which drove the vessel far from the coast of Bordeaux, lasted so long and with such fury that almost the entire voyage it was impossible to do any cooking, and passengers, sailors, and officers were reduced to the fare of dry biscuit and salt meat."

"Oh, the unhappy canon! what became of him?"

"He became furious, my sister, because this passage actually cost him his appetite."

"Ah, my brother, the finger of Providence was there!"

"In a word, whether by reason of the terror caused by the tempest, or a long deprivation of choice food, or whether the detestable nourishment he was compelled to take impaired his health, the canon, since he disembarked from the *Gastronome*, has completely lost his appetite. The little that he eats to sustain him, the majordomo tells me, is insipid and unpalatable, no mat-

ter how well prepared it may be; and more, he is tormented by the idea or superstition that Heaven has justly punished him for his inordinate indulgence. And, as Captain Horace is in his eyes the chief instrument of Heaven's anger, the canon has taken an unconquerable dislike to the miscreant, not forgetting, too, that all his luxuries were thrown into the sea by order of the captain. In vain has the captain tried to make him comprehend that his own salvation, as well as that of many others, depended on this sacrifice; Dom Diégo remains inflexible in his hatred. Well, my dear sister, would you believe that, notwithstanding that, the captain, upon his arrival at Bordeaux, had the audacity to ask of Dom Diégo the hand of his niece in marriage, assuming that this unhappy young girl was in love with him. You appreciate the fact, my sister, that two lovers do not remember bad cheer or terrible tempests, and that this miscreant has bewildered the innocent creature. I need not tell you of the fury of Dom Diégo at this insolent proposal from the captain, whom he regards as his mortal enemy, as the bad spirit sent to him by the anger of Heaven. So the canon has informed Dolores that, as a punishment for having dared to fall in love with such a scoundrel, he would put her in a convent upon his arrival in Paris, and that she should there take the veil."

"But, my brother, so far I see only success for our plans. Everything seems to favour them."

"Yes, my sister; but you are counting without the love of Dolores, and the resolute character of this damned captain."

"What audacity!"

"He followed on horseback, relay after relay, the carriage of the canon, galloping from Bordeaux to Paris like a state messenger. He must have a constitution of iron. He stopped at every inn where Dom Diégo stopped, and during the journey Dolores and the

captain were ogling each other, in spite of the rage and resistance of Dom Diégo. Could he prevent this love-sick girl looking out of the window? Could he prevent this miscreant riding on the highway by the side of his carriage?"

"Such audacity seems incredible, does it not, my brother?"

"Which is the reason I tell you we must be on guard everywhere from this madman. He is not alone; one of his sailors, a veritable blackguard, accompanied him, riding behind in his train, and holding on to his horse like a monkey on a donkey, so the majordomo told me. But that did not matter, this demon of a sailor is capable of anything to help his captain, to whom he is devoted. And that is not all. Twenty times on the route Dolores positively told her uncle that she did not wish to become a religious, that she wished to marry the captain, and that he would know how to come to her if they constrained her,—he and his sailor would deliver her if they had to set fire to the convent."

"What a bandit!" cried Sister Prudence. "What a desperate villain!"

"You see, dear sister, how things were yesterday, when Dom Diégo took possession of the apartment I had previously engaged for him. This morning he desired me to visit him. I found him in bed and very much depressed. He told me that a sudden revolution had taken place in the mind of his niece; that now she seemed as submissive and resigned as she had been rebellious, that she had at last consented to go to the convent, and to-day if it was required."

"My brother, my brother, this is a very sudden and timely change."

"Such is my opinion, my sister, and, if I am not mistaken, this sudden change hides some snare. I have told you we must play a sure game. It is a great deal, no doubt, to have this love-sick girl in our hands; but we

must not forget the enemy, this detestable Captain Horace, who, accompanied by his sailor, will no doubt be prowling around the house, like the ravening wolf spoken of in the Scriptures."

"*Quærens quem devoret*," said Sister Prudence, who prided herself upon her Latin.

"Just so, my sister, seeking whom he may devour, but, fortunately, there's a good watch-dog for every good wolf, and we have intelligent and courageous servants. The strictest watchfulness must be established without and within. We will soon know where this miscreant of a captain lives; he will not take a step without being followed by one of our men. He will be very clever and very brave if he accomplishes anything."

"This watchfulness seems to me very necessary, my dear brother."

"Now my carriage is below, let us go to the canon's apartments, and in an hour his niece will be here."

"Never to go out of this house, if it pleases Heaven, my brother, because it is for the eternal happiness of this poor foolish girl."

Two hours after this conversation Senora Dolores Salcedo entered the Convent of Ste. Rosalie.

CHAPTER II.

A FEW days after the entrance of Senora Dolores Salcedo in the house of Ste. Rosalie, and just at the close of the day, two men were slowly walking along the Boulevard de l'Hopital, one of the most deserted places in Paris.

The younger of these two individuals seemed to be about twenty-five or thirty years old. His face was frank and resolute, his complexion sunburnt, his figure tall and robust, his step decided, and his dress simple and of military severity.

His companion, a little shorter, but unusually square and thick-set, seemed to be about fifty-five years old, and presented that type of the sailor familiar to the eyes of Parisians. An oilcloth hat, low in shape, with a wide brim, placed on the back of his head, revealed a brow ornamented with five or six corkscrew curls, known as heart-catchers, while the rest of his hair was cut very close. This manner of wearing the hair, called the sailor style, was, if traditions are true, quite popular in 1825 among crews of the line sailing from the port of Brest.

A white shirt with a blue collar, embroidered in red, falling over his broad shoulders, permitted a view of the bull like neck of our sailor, whose skin was tanned until it resembled parchment, the colour of brick. A round vest of blue cloth, with buttons marked with an anchor, and wide trousers bound to his hips by a red woollen girdle, completed our man's apparel. Side-whiskers of brown, shaded with fawn colour, encased his square face,

which expressed both good humour and decision of character. A superficial observer might have supposed the left cheek of the sailor to be considerably inflamed, but a more attentive examination would have disclosed the fact that an enormous quid of tobacco produced this one-sided tumefaction. Let us add, lastly, that the sailor carried on his back a bag, whose contents seemed quite bulky.

The two men had just reached a place in front of a high wall surrounding a garden. The top of the trees could scarcely be distinguished, for the night had fallen.

The young man said to his companion, as he stopped and turned his ear eastward:

"Sans-Plume, listen."

"Please God, what is it, captain?" said the man with the tobacco quid, in reply to this singular surname.

"I am not mistaken, it is certainly here."

"Yes, captain, it is in this made land between these two large trees. Here is the place where the wall is a little damaged. I noticed it yesterday evening at dusk, when we picked up the stone and the letter.

"That is so. Come quick, my old seaman," said the captain to his sailor, indicating with his eye one of the large trees of the boulevard, several of whose branches hung over the garden wall. "Up, Sans-Plume, while we are waiting the hour let us see if we can rig the thing."

"Captain, there is still a bit of twilight, and I see below a man who is coming this way."

"Then let us wait. Hide first your bag behind the trunk of this tree, — you have forgotten nothing?"

"No, captain, all my rigging is in there."

"Come, then, let us go. This man is coming; we must not look as if we were lying to before these walls."

"That's it, captain, we'll stand upon another tack so as to put him out of his way."

And the two sailors began, as Sans-Plume had said in his picturesque language, to stand the other tack in the path parallel to the public walk, after the sailor had prudently picked up the bag he had hidden between the trees of the boulevard and the wall.

"Sans-Plume," said the young man, as they walked along, "are you sure you recognise the spot where the hackney-coach awaits us?"

"Yes, captain — But, I say, captain."

"What?"

"That man looks as if he were following us."

"Bah!"

"And spying on us."

"Come along, Sans-Plume, you are foolish!"

"Captain, let us set the prow larboard and you go and see."

"So be it," replied the captain.

And, followed by his sailor, he left the walk on the right of the boulevard, crossed the pavement, and took the walk on the left.

"Well, captain," said Sans-Plume, in a low voice, "you see this lascar navigates in our waters."

"That is true, we are followed."

"It is not the first time it has happened to me," said Sans-Plume, with a shade of conceit, hiding one-half of his mouth with the back of his hand in order to eject the excess of tobacco juice produced by the mastication of his enormous quid. "One day, in Senegal, Gorée, I was followed a whole league, bowsprit on stern, captain, till I came to a plantation of sugar-cane, and —"

"The devil! that man is surely following us," said the captain, interrupting the indiscreet confidences of the sailor. "That annoys me!"

"Captain, do you wish me to drop my bag and flank this lascar with tobacco, in order to teach him to ply to our windward in spite of us?"

"Fine thing! but do you keep still and follow me."

The captain and his sailor, again crossing the pavement, regained the walk on the right.

"See, captain," said Sans-Plume, "he turns tack with us."

"Let him go, and let us watch his steps."

The man who followed the two sailors, a large, jolly-looking fellow in a blue blouse and cap, went beyond them a few steps, then stopped and looked up at the stars, for the night had fully come.

The captain, after saying a few words in a low tone to the sailor who had hidden himself behind the trunk of one of the large trees of the boulevard, advanced alone to meet his disagreeable observer, and said to him:

"Comrade, it is a fine evening."

"Very fine."

"You are waiting for some one here?"

"Yes."

"I, also."

"Ah!"

"Comrade, have you been waiting long?"

"For three hours at least."

"Comrade," replied the captain, after a moment's silence, "would you like to make double the sum they give you for following me and spying me?"

"I do not know what you mean. I do not follow you, sir. I am not spying you."

"Yes."

"No."

"Let us end this. I will give you what you want if you will go on your way, — stop, I have the gold in my pocket."

And the captain tingled the gold in his vest pocket, and said:

"I have twenty-five or thirty louis — "

"*Hein!*" said the man, with a singularly insinuating manner, "twenty-five or thirty louis?"

At this moment a distant clock sounded half-past seven o'clock. Almost at the same instant a guttural cry, resembling a call or a signal, was heard in the direction that the man in the blouse had first taken to join the two sailors. The spy made a movement as if he understood the significance of this cry, and for a moment seemed undecided.

"Half-past seven o'clock," said the captain to himself. "That beggar there is not alone."

Having made this reflection, he coughed.

Scarcely had the captain coughed, when the spy felt himself seized vigorously at the ankles by some one who had thrown himself suddenly between his legs. He fell backwards, but in falling he had time to cry with a loud voice:

"Here, John, run to the —"

He was not able to finish. Sans-Plume, after having thrown him down, had unceremoniously taken a seat on the breast of the spy, and, holding him by the throat, prevented his speaking.

"The devil! do not strangle him," said the captain, who, kneeling down, was binding securely with his silk handkerchief the two legs of the indiscreet busybody.

"The bag, captain," said Sans-Plume, keeping his grip on the throat of the spy, "the bag! it is large enough to wrap his head and arms; we will bind him tight around the loins and he will not budge any more than a roll of old canvas."

No sooner said than done. In a few seconds the spy, cowled like a monk in the bag to the middle of his body, with his legs bound, found himself unable to move. Sans-Plume had the courtesy to push his victim into one of the wide verdant slopes which separated the trees, and nothing more was heard from that quarter but an interrupted series of smothered bellowings.

"The alarm will be given at the convent! Half-past

seven has just struck," said the captain to his sailor. "We must risk all now or all is lost!"

"In twice three movements the thing is ready, captain," replied Sans-Plume, running with his companion toward the large trees which hung over the wall near which they had at first stood.

CHAPTER III.

WHILE these events were transpiring on the boulevard, and a little before half after seven had sounded, another scene was taking place in the interior of the convent garden. Sister Prudence, the mother superior, and Dolores Salcedo were walking in the garden, notwithstanding the advanced hour of the evening.

Dolores, a brunette of charming appearance, united in herself the rare and bewitching perfections of Spanish beauty. Hair of a blue black, which, when uncoiled, dragged upon the floor; a pale complexion warmed by the sun of the South; large eyes, by turns full of fire and languid sweetness; a little mouth as red as the bud of the pomegranate steeped in dew; a delicate and voluptuous form, tapering fingers, and an Andalusian foot and ankle, completed her list of charms. As to the exquisite grace of her figure and gait, one must, to have any idea of it, have seen the undulating movements of the beautiful senoras of Seville or Cadiz, when, speaking with their eyes or playing with their fans, they slowly promenade, a beautiful summer evening, on the marble floor of the Alameda.

Dolores accompanied Sister Prudence. Walking and talking, the two women approached the wall behind which Captain Horace and his sailor had stopped.

"You see, my dear daughter," said the mother superior to Dolores, "I grant you all you desire, and, although the rules of the house forbid promenades in the garden after nightfall, I have consented to stay here

until half-past seven o'clock, our supper hour, which will soon sound."

"I thank you, madame," said Dolores, with a slight Spanish accent, and in a voice deliciously resonant. "I feel that this promenade will do me good."

"You must call me mother and not madame, my dear daughter, I have already told you that it is the custom here."

"I will conform to it, if I can, madame."

"Again!"

"It is difficult to call a person mother who is not your mother," said Dolores, with a sigh.

"I am your spiritual mother, my dear daughter; your mother in God, as you are, as you will be, my daughter in God; because you will leave us no more, you will renounce the deceitful pleasures of a perverse and corrupt world, you will have here a heavenly foretaste of eternal peace."

"I begin to discover it, madame."

"You will live in prayer, silence, and meditation."

"I have no other desire, madame."

"Well, well, my dear daughter, after all, what will you sacrifice?"

"Oh, nothing, absolutely nothing!"

"I like that response, my dear daughter; really, it is nothing, less than nothing, these wicked and worldly passions which cause us so much sorrow and throw us in the way of perdition."

"Just Heaven! it makes me tremble to think of it, madame."

"The Lord inspires you to answer thus, my dear daughter, and I am sure now that you can hardly understand how you have been able to love this miscreant captain."

"It is true, madame, I was stupid enough to dream of happiness and the joys of family affection; criminal enough to find this happiness in mutual love and hope

to become, like many others, a devoted wife and tender mother; it was, as you have told me, an offence to Heaven. I repent my impious vows, I comprehend all that is odious in them; you must pardon me, madame, for having been wicked and silly to such a degree."

"It is not necessary to exaggerate, my dear daughter," said Sister Prudence, struck with the slightly ironical accent with which Dolores had uttered these last words. "But," added she, observing the direction taken by the young girl, "what is the good of returning to this walk? It will soon be the hour for supper; come, my dear daughter, let us go back to the house."

"Oh, madame, do you not perceive that sweet odour on this side of the grove?"

"Those are a few clusters of mignonette. But come, it is getting cool; I am not sixteen like you, my dear daughter, and I am afraid of catching cold."

"Just one moment, please, that I may gather a few of these flowers."

"Go on, then, you must do everything you wish, my dear daughter; stop, the night is clear enough for you to see this mignonette ten steps away; go and gather a few sprigs and return."

Dolores, letting go the arm of the mother superior, went rapidly toward the clusters of flowers.

At this moment half-past seven o'clock sounded.

"Half-past seven," murmured Dolores, trembling and turning her ear to listen, "he is there, he will come!"

"My dear daughter, it is the hour for supper," said the mother superior, walking on ahead of the canon's niece. "Stop, do you not hear the clock? Quick! quick! come, it will take ten minutes to reach the house, for we are at the bottom of the garden."

"Here I am, madame," replied the young girl, running before the mother superior, who said to her, with affected sweetness:

"Oh, you foolish little thing, you run like a frightened fawn."

Suddenly Dolores shrieked, and fell on her knees.

"Great God!" cried Sister Prudence, running up to her, "what is the matter, dear daughter? Why did you scream? What are you on your knees for?"

"Ah, madame!"

"But what is it?"

"What pain!"

"Where?"

"In my foot, madame, I have sprained my ankle. Oh, how I suffer! My God, how I suffer!"

"Try to get up, my dear child," said the mother, approaching Dolores with a vague distrust, for this sprain seemed to her quite unnatural.

"Oh, impossible, madame, I cannot make a movement."

"But try, at least."

"I wish I could."

And the young girl made a show of wishing to stand up, but she fell again on her knees, with a shriek that could be heard on the other side of the garden wall.

Then Dolores said, with a groan:

"You see, madame, it is impossible for me to move. I pray you return to the house, and tell some one to come for me with a chair or a litter. Oh, how I suffer! My God, how I suffer! For pity's sake, madame, go back quick to the house; it is so far, I shall never be able to drag myself there."

"Mademoiselle," cried the mother superior, "I am not your dupe! You have no more of a sprain than I have, it is an abominable falsehood! You wish, I know not for what reason, to send me away, and remain alone in the garden. Ah, indeed you make me repent of my condescension."

The light noise of a few pebbles falling across the boughs of the trees attracted the attention of the

mother superior and Dolores, who, radiant with delight, leaped up with a bound, exclaiming:

"There he is!"

"Of whom are you speaking, unhappy girl?"

"Of Captain Horace, madame," said Dolores, curtseying with mock reverence. "He is coming to carry me away."

"What impudence! Ah, you think that in spite of me —"

"We are at the bottom of the garden, madame; cry, call, nobody will hear you."

"Oh, what horrible treason!" cried the mother superior. "But it is impossible! The men on guard have not dared leave the boulevard since nightfall."

"Horatio!" cried Dolores, in a clear, silvery voice. "My Horatio!"

"Shameless creature!" cried Sister Prudence, in desperation, rushing forward to seize Dolores by the arm. But the Spanish girl, nimble as a gazelle, with two bounds was out of the reach of Sister Prudence, whose limbs, stiffened by age, refused to lend themselves to gymnastic exercise; and already overcome, she cried, wringing her hands:

"Oh, those miserable patrols! They have not been on guard. I would cry, but they would not hear me at the convent. To run there is to leave this wretched girl here alone! Ah, I understand too late why this serpent wished to prolong our walk."

"Horatio," cried Dolores a second time, holding herself at a distance from the mother superior, "my dear Horatio!"

"Descend!" cried a ringing male voice which seemed to come from the sky.

This celestial voice was no other than that of Captain Horace, giving the signal to his faithful Sans-Plume to descend something.

The mother superior and Dolores, notwithstanding

the difference of the emotions which agitated them, raised their eyes simultaneously when they heard the voice of Captain Horace.

But let us recall the situation of the walk and garden in order to explain the miracle about to be manifested to the sight of the recluse.

Two of the largest branches of the trees on the boulevard outside extended like a gibbet, so to speak, above and beyond the coping of the convent wall. The night was so clear that Dolores and the mother superior saw, slowly descending, sustained by cords, an Indian hammock in the bottom of which Captain Horace was extended, throwing with his hand a shower of kisses to Dolores.

When the hammock was within two feet of the earth, the captain called, in a ringing voice: "Stop!"

The hammock rested motionless. The captain leaped out of it, and said to the young girl:

"Quick, we have not a moment to lose! Dear Dolores, get into this hammock at once and do not be afraid."

"You will kill me first, villain!" cried the mother superior, throwing herself upon the young girl, whom she held within her arms, at the same time crying out, "Help! help!"

At this moment lights could be seen coming and going at a distance from the bottom of the garden.

"Here comes somebody at last!" screamed Sister Prudence, redoubling her cries of "Help! help!"

"Madame," said the captain, "let loose Dolores immediately!" And he forcibly withdrew the young girl from the obstinate embrace, holding Sister Prudence until Dolores could spring into the hammock. Seeing her safely seated there, the captain called:

"Ho there! Hoist."

And the hammock rose rapidly, so light was the weight of the young girl.

Sister Prudence, throughly enraged, and thinking that

help would come perhaps too late, for the lights were still distant, screamed louder than ever, and threw herself on the hammock, to hold it down; but the captain drew her arm familiarly within his own, and, in spite of her struggles, held her like a vice.

"Dolores," said the captain, "do not be afraid, my love. When you reach the large branches, yield yourself without fear to the motion which will draw the hammock outside the wall. Sans-Plume is on the other side, and he is watching everything. Tell him, as soon as you reach the earth, to throw me the knotted rope, and hold it well on the outside."

"Yes, my Horatio," said Dolores, who was already eight or ten feet above the earth; "be calm, our love doubles my courage."

And the young mocker, leaning out of the hammock, said, with a laugh;

"Good evening, Sister Prudence, good evening!"

"You will be damned, accursed creature," said the mother superior.

"But you, you wretch! you shall not escape me," added she, holding on with desperate and convulsive anger to the captain's arm.

"They are coming, and you will be taken."

In fact, the lights were becoming more and more visible, and the captain could distinctly hear the voices of persons calling:

"Sister Prudence! Sister Prudence!"

The arrival of this aid increased the strength of the mother superior, who still clinched the arm of Horace. She was beginning to embarrass the sailor quite seriously; he could not resort to violence to escape this aged women. In the meanwhile, the lights and the voices came nearer and nearer, and Sans-Plume, occupied, no doubt, in assuring the safe descent of Dolores on the other side of the wall, had not yet thrown the rope, his only means of flight. Then wishing, at any cost, to

extricate himself from the grasp of the sister, the captain said to her:

"I pray you, madame, release me."

"Never, villain. Help, help!"

"Then pardon me, madame, because you force me to it. I am going to dance with you an infernal waltz, a riotous polka."

"A polka with me! You dare!"

"Come, madame, since you insist upon it we must. Keep time to the air. Tra, la, la, la."

And joining the act to the words, the merry sailor passed the arm that was free around the bony waist of Sister Prudence, and carried her with him, singing his refrain and whirling her around with such rapidity that, at the end of a few seconds, bewildered, dizzy, and suffocated, she could only gasp the syllables:

"Ah, help — help — you — wretch! He— takes — my — breath! Help — help!"

And soon overcome by the rapid whirling, Sister Prudence felt her strength failing. The captain saw her about to faint on his arms, and only had time to lay her gently on the grass.

"Ho!" at this moment cried Sans-Plume on the other side of the wall, as he threw over the knotted rope to the captain.

"The devil, it is high time!" said the captain, rushing after the rope, for the lights and the persons who carried them were no more than fifty steps distant.

Armed with pitchforks and guns, they approached the mother superior, who had recovered sufficiently to point over the wall as she said:

"There he is getting away!"

One of the men, armed with a gun, guided by her gesture, saw the captain, who, thanks to his agility as a sailor, had just gained the crest of the wall.

The man fired his gun, but missed his aim.

"You! You!" cried he to another man armed like

himself. "There he is on the top of the wall reaching for the branches of that tree, — fire!"

The second shot was fired just at the moment when Captain Horace, astride one of the branches projecting over the garden, was approaching the trunk of the tree, by means of which he meant to descend on the outside. Scarcely had the second shot been fired, when Horace made a sudden leap, stopped a moment, and then disappeared in the thick foliage of the trees.

"Run! run outside!" cried Sister Prudence, still panting for breath. "There is still time to catch them!"

The orders of the mother superior were executed, but when they arrived on the boulevard outside, Dolores, the captain, and Sans-Plume had disappeared. They found nothing but the hammock, which was lying a few steps from the spy, who, enveloped in his bag, dolefully uttering smothered groans at the bottom of the ditch.

CHAPTER IV.

EIGHT days after the abduction of Dolores Salcedo by Captain Horace, Abbé Ledoux, in bed, received the visit of his physician.

The invalid, lying in a soft bed standing in the alcove of a comfortable apartment, had always a fat and ruddy face; his triple chin descended to the collar of a fine shirt made of Holland cloth, and the purple brilliancy of the holy man's complexion contrasted with the immaculate whiteness of his cotton cap, bound, according to the ancient custom, with an orange-coloured ribbon. Notwithstanding these indications of plethoric health, the abbé, his head propped on his pillow in a doleful manner, uttered from time to time the most plaintive groans, while his hand, small and effeminate, was given to his physician, who was gravely feeling his pulse.

Doctor Gasterini,—such was the name of the physician,— although seventy-five years old, did not look sixty. Tall and erect, as well as lean and nervous, with a clear complexion and rosy lips, the doctor, when he smiled with his pleasant, elegant air, disclosed thirty-two teeth of irreproachable whiteness, which seemed to combine the polish of ivory with the sharp durability of steel; a forest of white hair, naturally curled, encircled the amiable and intelligent face of the doctor. Dressed always in black, with a certain affectation, he remained faithful to the tradition of small-clothes made of silk cloth, with shoe buckles of gold, and silk stockings, which clearly delineated his strong, sinewy legs.

Doctor Gasterini was holding delicately between his thumb and his index finger — whose rosy polished nails might have been the envy of a pretty woman — the wrist of his patient, who religiously awaited the decision of his physician.

"My dear abbé," said the doctor, "you are not at all sick."

"But, doctor — "

"You have a soft, pliant skin, and sixty-five pulsations to the minute. It would be impossible to find conditions of better health."

"But, again, doctor, I — "

"But, again, abbé, you are not sick. I am a good judge, perhaps."

"And I tell you, doctor, that I have not closed my eyes the whole night. Madame Siboulet, my housekeeper, has been on her feet constantly, — she gave me several times some drops made by the good sisters."

"Stuff!"

"And orange flower distilled at the Sacred Heart."

"The devil!"

"Yes, doctor, you may laugh; none of these remedies have given me relief. I have done nothing but turn over and over all night long in my bed. Alas, alas! I am not well. I have an excitement, an insupportable weariness."

"Perhaps, my dear abbé, you experienced yesterday some annoyance, some contradiction, and as you are very obstinate, very conceited, very spiteful — "

"I?"

"You."

"Doctor, I assure you — "

"This annoyance, I tell you, might have put you in a diabolical humour; for I know no remedy which can prevent these vexations. As to being ill, or even indisposed, you are not the least so in the world, my dear abbé."

"Then why did I ask you to come to see me this morning?"

"You ought to know that better than I, my dear abbé; nevertheless, I suspect the unusual motive which has made you desire my visit."

"That is rather hard."

"No, not very hard, for we are old acquaintances, and I know all your tricks, my dear abbé."

"My tricks! — you know my tricks?"

"You contrive excellent ones, sometimes, — but to return to our subject, I believe that, under a pretext of sickness which really does not exist, you have sent for me to learn from me, directly or indirectly, something which is of interest to you."

"Come, doctor, that is rather a disagreeable pleasantry."

"Wait, my dear abbé. In my youth I was physician to the Duke d'Otrante, when he was minister of police. He enjoyed, like you, perfect health, yet there was scarcely a day that he did not exact a visit from me. I was unsophisticated then, and, although well equipped in my profession, I had need of patrons, so, notwithstanding my visits to his Excellency seemed unnecessary, I went to his house regularly every day, about the hour he made his toilet, and we conversed. The minister was very inquisitive, and as I was professionally thrown with persons of all conditions, he, with charming good nature, plied me with questions concerning my patients. I responded with all the sincerity of my soul. One day I arrived, as I have told you, at the minister's house, when he had just completed his toilet, the very moment when a journeyman barber, the most uncleanly-looking knave I had ever seen in my life, had finished shaving him.

"'M. duke,' said I to the minister, after the barber had departed, 'how is it that, instead of being shaved by one of your valets, you prefer the services of these

frightful journeyman barbers whom you change almost every fortnight?'

"'My dear,' replied the duke in a confidential tone, "'you cannot imagine how much one can learn about all sorts of people and things, when one knows how to set such fellows as that prattling.' Was this confession an amusement or a blunder on the part of this great man, or, rather, did he think me too silly to comprehend the full significance of his words? I do not know; but I do know that this avowal enlightened me as to the real intention of his Excellency in having me chat with him so freely every morning. After that, I responded with much circumspection to the questions of the cunning chief, who knew so well how to put in practice the transcendent maxim, 'The best spies are those who are spies without knowing it.'"

"The anecdote is interesting, as are all that you tell, my dear doctor," replied the abbé, with repressed anger, "but I swear to you that your allusion is entirely inapplicable, and that, alas! I am very sick."

"Forty years yet of such illness, and you will become a centenarian, my dear abbé," said the doctor, rising and preparing to take his leave.

"Oh, what a man! what a man!" cried the abbé. "Do listen to me, doctor, you have a heart of bronze; can you abandon a poor sick man in this manner? Give me five minutes!"

"So be it; let us chat if you wish it, my dear abbé. I have a quarter of an hour at your disposal; you are a man of mind, I cannot better employ the time given to this visit."

"Ah, doctor, you are cruel!"

"If you wish a more agreeable physician, address some others of my fraternity. You will find them eager to give their attention to the celebrated preacher, Abbé Ledoux, the most fashionable director of the Faubourg St. Germain — for, in spite of the Republic, or, for

reason of the Republic, there is more than ever a Faubourg St. Germain, and, under every possible administration, the protection of Abbé Ledoux would be a lofty one."

"No, doctor, I want no other physician than you, terrible man that you are! Just see the confidence you inspire in me. It seems to me your presence has already done me good, — it calms me."

"Poor dear abbé, what confidence! It is touching; that certainly proves that it is only faith which saves."

"Do not speak of faith," said the abbé, affecting anger pleasantly. "Be silent, you pagan, materialist, atheist, republican, for you are and have been all, at your pleasure."

"Oh, oh, abbé, what an array of fine words!"

"You deserve them, wicked man; you will be damned, do you hear? — more than damned!"

"God may will it that we may meet each other some day, my poor abbé."

"I, damned?"

"Eh, eh."

"Do I abandon myself as you do to the brutality of all my appetites? Go, — you are a perfect Sardanapalus!"

"Flatterer! but then it is your manner. You reproach an old Lovelace for the enormities of which he would like to be guilty, and in the meantime you know that he has none of them; but it is all the same, your reproaches delight him, they render him cheerful; then he confesses all sorts of sins, of which, alas! he is incapable, poor man, and you have the air of giving a last pretext to his decaying imbecility."

"Fie! fie! doctor, the serpent had no more malignity than you."

"You reproach the broken-down politician, the powerless man of state, not less furiously, for his dark intrigues to overthrow the political world, — Europe, perhaps.

Then with what unction the poor man relishes your reproaches! Everybody flies him like a pest when he opens his mouth to bore them with his politics; but what good fortune for him to unveil to you his Machiavellian projects for the advantage of the destinies of Europe, and to find a patient listener to the ravings of his old age."

"Yes, yes, jest, jeer, ridicule, you rascally doctor! You wish to excuse yourself by reviling others."

"Let us see, abbé, let us make an examination of conscience. Our professions will be inverted; I, the physician for the body, am going to ask a consultation with you, the physician for the soul."

"And you will have precious need of this consultation."

"Of what do you accuse me, abbé?"

"In the first place, you are a glutton, like Vitellius, Lucullus, the Prince of Soubise, Talleyrand, D'Aigrefeuille, Cambacérès, and Brillat-Savarin all together."

"A flatterer always! You reproach me for my only great and lofty quality."

"Ah, come now, doctor, do you take me for an oyster with your frivolous talk?"

"Take you for an oyster? How conceited you are! Unfortunately, I cannot make a comparison so advantageous to you, abbé. It would be a heresy, an anachronism. Good oysters (and others are not counted as existing) do not give the right to discuss them until about the middle of November, and we are by no means there."

"This, doctor, may be very witty, but it does not convince me in the least that gluttony is, in you or any other person, a quality."

"I will convince you of it."

"You?"

"I, my dear abbé."

"That would be rather difficult. And how?"

"Give me your evening on the twentieth of November and I will prove that —"

But interrupting himself, the doctor added:

"Come now, my dear abbé, what are you constantly looking at there by the side of that door?"

The holy man, thus taken unawares, blushed to his ears, for he had listened to the doctor with distraction, impatiently turning his eyes toward the door as if he expected a person who had not arrived; but after the first moment of surprise the abbé did not seem disconcerted, and replied:

"What door do you speak of, doctor? I do not know what you mean."

"I mean that you frequently look on this side as if you expected the appearance of some one."

"There is no one in the world, dear doctor, except you, who could have such ideas. I was entirely absorbed in your sophistical but intelligent conversation."

"Ah, abbé, abbé, you overwhelm me!"

"You wish, in a word, doctor, to prove to me that gluttony is a noble, sublime passion, do you not?"

"Sublime, abbé, that is the word, sublime, — if not in itself at least in its consequences; above all, in the interest of agriculture and commerce."

"Come, doctor, that is a paradox. Agriculture and commerce are sustained as other things are."

"It is not a paradox, it is a fact, yes, a fact, and if it is demonstrated to you positively, mathematically, practically, and economically, what can you say? Will you still doubt it?"

"I will doubt, or rather I will believe this abomination less than ever."

"How, in spite of evidence, abbé?"

"Because of evidence, if so be that this evidence can ever exist, for it is by just such means of these pretended evidences, these perfidious appearances, that the bad spirit leads us into the most dangerous snares."

"What, abbé, the devil! I am not a seminarian whom you are preparing to take the bands. You are a man of mind and of knowledge. When I talk reason to you, talk reason to me, and not of the devil and his horns."

"But, pagan, idolater that you are, do you not know that gluttony is perhaps the most abominable of the seven capital sins?"

"In the first place, abbé, I pray you do not calumniate like that the seven capital sins, but speak of them with the deference which is their due. I have found them profoundly respected in general and in particular."

"Indeed, it is not only gluttony that he glorifies, — he pushes his paradox to the glorification of the seven capital sins!"

"Yes, dear abbé, all the seven, considered from a certain point of view."

"That is monomania."

"Will you be convinced, abbé?"

"Of what?"

"Of the possible excellence, — of the conditional existence of the worldly and philosophical excellence of the seven capital sins."

"Really, doctor, do you take me for a child?"

"Give me your evening on the twentieth of November; you will be convinced."

"Come now, doctor, why always the twentieth of November?"

"That is for me a prophetic day, and more, it is the anniversary of my birth, my dear abbé, so give me your evening on that day and you will not regret having come."

"Very well, then, the twentieth of November, if my health — "

"Permits you, — well understood, my dear abbé; but my experience tells me that you will be able to drag yourself to see me on that day."

"What a man! He is capable of giving me a perfect example, in his own damned person, of the seven capital sins."

At this moment the door opened.

It was on this door, more than once, that the glances of Abbé Ledoux had been turned with secret and growing impatience, during his conversation with the doctor.

CHAPTER V.

THE abbé's housekeeper, having entered the chamber, handed a letter to her master, and, exchanging with him a look of intelligence, said:

"It is very urgent, M. abbé."

"Permit me, doctor?" said the holy man, before breaking the seal of the letter he held in his hand.

"At your convenience, my dear abbé," replied the doctor, rising from his seat; "I must leave you now."

"I pray you, just a word!" cried the abbé, who seemed especially anxious that the doctor should not depart so soon. "Give me time to glance over this letter, and I am at your service."

"But, abbé, we have nothing more to say to each other. I have an urgent consultation, and the hour is —"

"I implore you, doctor," insisted the abbé, breaking the seal and running his eyes over the letter he had just received, "in the name of Heaven, give me only five minutes, not more."

Surprised at this singular persistence on the part of the abbé, the doctor hesitated to go out, when the invalid, discontinuing his reading of the letter, raised his eyes to heaven and exclaimed:

"Ah, my God, my God!"

"What is the matter?"

"Ah, my poor doctor!"

"Finish what you have to say."

"Ah, doctor, it was Providence that sent you here."

"Providence!"

"Yes, because I find it in my power to render you a great service, perhaps."

The physician appeared to be a little doubtful of the good-will of Abbé Ledoux, and accepted his words not without a secret distrust.

"Let us see, my dear abbé," replied he, "what service can you render me?"

"You have sometimes spoken to me of your sister's numerous children, whom you have raised (notwithstanding your faults, wicked man) with paternal tenderness, after the early death of their parents."

"Go on, abbé," said the doctor, fixing a penetrating gaze on the saintly man, "go on."

"I was altogether ignorant that one of your nephews served in the navy, and had been made captain. His name is Horace Brémont, is it not?"

At the name of Horace, the doctor started, imperceptibly; his gaze seemed to penetrate to the depth of the abbé's heart, and he replied, coldly:

"I have a nephew who is captain in the navy and his name is Horace."

"And he is now in Paris?"

"Or elsewhere, abbé."

"For God's sake, let us talk seriously, my dear doctor, the time is precious. See here what has been written to me and you will judge of the importance of the letter.

"'M. Abbé: — I know that you are very intimate with the celebrated Doctor Gasterini; you can render him a great service. His nephew, Captain Horace, is compromised in a very disagreeable affair; although he has succeeded in hiding himself up to this time, his retreat has been discovered and perhaps, at the moment that I am writing to you, his person has been seized.'"

The abbé stopped and looked attentively at the doctor. The doctor remained impassible.

Surprised at this indifference, the abbé said, in a pathetic tone:

"Ah, my poor doctor, what cruel suffering for you! But what has this unfortunate captain done?"

"I know nothing about it, abbé, continue."

Evidently the saintly man expected another result of the reading of his letter. However, not allowing himself to be disconcerted, he continued:

"'Perhaps at this moment his person has been seized,'" repeated he, laying stress on these words, and going on with the letter. "'But there remains one chance of saving this young man who is more thoughtless than culpable; you must, upon the reception of this letter, send some one immediately to Doctor Gasterini.'"

And, stopping again, the abbé added:

"As I told you, doctor, Providence sent you here."

"It has never done anything else for my sake," coldly replied the doctor. "Go on, abbé."

"'You must, upon the reception of this letter, send immediately to Doctor Gasterini,'" repeated the abbé, more and more surprised at the impassibility of the physician, and his indifference to the misfortune which threatened his nephew. "'The doctor must send some person in whom he has confidence, without losing a minute, to warn Captain Horace to leave his retreat. Perhaps in this way he may get the start of the officers about to arrest this unfortunate young man.'

"I need not say more to you, my dear doctor," hastily added the abbé, throwing the letter on the bed. "A minute's delay may lose all. Run, quick, save this unhappy young man! What! You do not move; you do not reply! What are you thinking of, my poor doctor? Why do you look at me with such a strange expression? Did you not hear what has been written to me? And it is underlined, too. 'He must go instantly, without losing a minute, to warn Captain Horace to leave his retreat.' Really, doctor, I do not understand you."

"But I understand you perfectly, my dear abbé," said the doctor, with sardonic calmness. "But, upon honour, this expedient is really not up to the height of your usual inventions; you have done better than that, abbé, much better."

"An expedient! My inventions!" replied the abbé, feigning amazement. "Come, doctor, you surely are not speaking seriously?"

"You have forgotten, dear abbé, that an old fox like me discovers a snare from afar."

"Doctor," replied the abbé, no longer able to conceal his violent anger, "you are at liberty to jest, — at liberty to let the time pass, and lose the opportunity of saving your nephew. I have warned you as a friend. Now, do as you please, I wash my hands of it."

"So then, my dear abbé, you were and you are in the plot of those sanctimonious persons who desired to make a nun of Dolores Salcedo, for the purpose of getting possession of the property she would one day inherit from her uncle, the canon?"

"Dolores Salcedo! Her uncle, the canon! Really, doctor, I do not know what you mean."

"Ah! ah! you are in that pious plot! It is well to know it; it is always useful to recognise your adversaries, above all, when they are as clever as you are, dear abbé."

"But, hear me, doctor, I swear to you — "

"Stop, abbé, let us play an open game. You sent for me this morning, that the pathetic epistle you have just read to me might arrive in my presence."

"Doctor!" cried the abbé, "that is carrying distrust, suspicion, to a point which becomes — which becomes — permit me to say it to you — "

"Oh, by all means, — I permit you."

"Well, which becomes outrageous in the last degree, doctor. Ah, truly," added the abbé, with bitterness, "I was far from expecting that my eagerness

to do you a kindness would be rewarded in such a manner."

"Zounds! I know very well, my poor abbé, that you hoped your ingenious stratagem would have an entirely different result."

"Doctor, this is too much!"

"No, abbé, it is not enough. Now, listen to me. This is what you hoped, I say, from your ingenious stratagem: Frightened by the danger to which my nephew was exposed, I would thank you effusively for the means you offered me to save him, and would fly like an arrow to warn this poor fellow to leave his place of concealment."

"So, in fact, any other person in your place, doctor, would have done, but you take care not to act so reasonably. Surely, to speak the truth, you must be struck with frenzy and blindness."

"Alas! abbé, it is the beginning of the punishment for my sins. But let us return to the consequences of your ingenious stratagem. According to your hope, then, I would fly like an arrow to save, as you advise, my nephew. My carriage is below. I would get in it, and have myself conveyed as rapidly as possible to the mysterious retreat of Captain Horace."

"Eh, without doubt, doctor, that is what you should have done some time ago."

"Now, do you know what would have happened, my poor abbé?"

"You would have saved your nephew."

"I would have lost him, I would have betrayed him, I would have delivered him to his enemies, — and see how. I wager that at this very hour, while I am talking to you, there is, not far from here in the street, and even in sight of this house, a cab, to which a strong horse is hitched, and by a strange chance (unless you countermand your order) this cab would follow my carriage wherever it might go."

The abbé turned scarlet, but replied:

"I do not know what cab you are speaking of, doctor."

"In other words, my dear abbé, you have been seeking traces of my nephew in vain. In order to discover his retreat, you have had me followed in vain. Now, you hoped, by the sudden announcement of the danger he was running, to push me to the extremity of warning the captain. Your emissary below would have followed my carriage, so that, without knowing it, I, myself, would have disclosed the secret of my nephew's hiding-place. Again, abbé, for any other than yourself, the invention was not a bad one, but you have accustomed your admirers — and permit me to include myself among them — to higher and bolder conceptions. Let us hope, then, that another time you will show yourself more worthy of yourself. Good-bye, and without bearing you any grudge, my dear abbé, I count on you for our pleasant evening the twentieth of November. Otherwise, I will come to remind you of your promise. Good-bye, again, my poor, dear abbé. Come, do not look so vexed, — so out of countenance; console yourself for this little defeat by recalling your past triumphs."

And with this derisive conclusion to his remarks, Doctor Gasterini left Abbé Ledoux.

"You sing victory, old serpent!" cried the abbé, purple with anger and shaking his fist at the door by which the doctor went out. "You are very arrogant, but you do not know that this morning even we have recaptured Dolores Salcedo, and your miserable nephew shall not escape us, for I am as cunning as you are, infernal doctor, and, as you say, I have more than one trick in my bag."

The doctor, the subject of this imprecatory monologue, had concealed the disquietude he felt by the discovery he had just made. He knew Abbé Ledoux capable of taking a brilliant revenge, so as he descended the steps of the saintly man's house, the doctor, before entering

his carriage, looked cautiously on both sides of the street. As he expected, he saw a public cab about twenty steps from where he was standing. In this cab was a large man, wearing a brown overcoat. Walking up to the cab, the doctor, with a confidential air, said in a low voice to the large man:

"My friend, you are posted there, are you not, to follow this open carriage with two horses, standing before the door, Number 17?"

"Sir," said the man, hesitating, "I do not know who you are, or why you —"

"Hush! my friend," replied the doctor, in a tone full of mystery, "I have just left Abbé Ledoux; the order of proceeding is changed; the abbé expects you at once, to give you new orders, — quick, go, go!"

The fat man, reassured by the explicit directions given by the doctor, hesitated no longer, descended from his cab, and went in haste to see the Abbé Ledoux. When the doctor saw the door close upon the emissary of the abbé, feeling certain that he was not followed, he ordered his coachman to drive in haste to the Faubourg Poissonnière, for if he feared nothing for his nephew, he had reason enough for uneasiness since he had learned that Abbé Ledoux was concerned in this intrigue.

The doctor's carriage had just entered one of the less frequented streets of the Faubourg Poissonnière, not far from the gate of the same name, when he perceived at a short distance quite a large assemblage in front of a modest-looking house. The doctor ordered his carriage to stop, descended from it, mingled with the crowd, and said to one of the men:

"What is the matter there, sir?"

"It seems, sir, they are taking back a stray dove to the dove-cote."

"A dove!"

"Yes, or if you like it better, a young girl who escaped from a convent. The commissary of police

arrived with his deputies, and a very fat man in a blue overcoat, who looked like a priest. He had the house opened. The fugitive was found there, and put into a carriage with the fat man in a blue overcoat. I have never seen any citizen ornamented with such a stomach."

Doctor Gasterini did not wait to hear more, but rushed through the crowd and imperatively rang the bell at the door of the little house of which we have spoken. A young servant, still pale with emotion, came to open it.

"Where is Madame Dupont?" asked the physician, impatiently.

"She is at home, sir. Oh, sir, if you only knew!"

The doctor made no reply; went through two apartments, and entered a bedchamber, where he found an aged woman, with a venerable-looking face full of sweetness.

"Ah, doctor, doctor!" cried Madame Dupont, bursting into tears, "what a misfortune, what a scandal, poor young girl!"

"I am grieved, my poor Madame Dupont, that the service you rendered me should have been followed by such disagreeable consequences."

"Oh, do not think it is that which afflicts, doctor. I owe you more than my life, since I owe you the life of my son; I do not think of complaining of a transient vexation, and I know you too well, in other things, to raise the least doubt as to the intentions which led you to ask me to give a temporary asylum to this young girl."

"By this time, my dear Madame Dupont, I can and I ought to tell you all. Here is the whole story in two words: I have a nephew, an indiscreet boy, but the bravest fellow in the world; he is captain in the marine service. In his last voyage from Cadiz to Bordeaux he took as passengers a Spanish canon and his niece. My nephew fell desperately in love with the niece, but by a series of events too long and too ridiculous to relate to

you, the canon took the greatest aversion to my nephew, and informed him that he should never marry Dolores. The opposition exasperated the lovers; my devil of a nephew followed the canon to Paris, discovered the convent where the uncle had placed the young girl, put himself in correspondence with her, and eloped with her. Horace — that is his name — is an honest fellow, and, the elopement accomplished, he introduced Dolores to me and confessed all to me. While the marriage was pending, he besought me to place this young girl in a suitable house, since, for a thousand reasons, it was impossible for me to keep the child in my house after such an uproar. Then I thought of you, my good Madame Dupont."

"Ah, sir, I was certain that you acted nobly in that as you have always, and, besides, the short time that she was here Mlle. Dolores interested me exceedingly, — indeed I was already attached to her, and you can judge of my distress this morning when — "

"The commissary of police ordered the house to be opened; I know it. And the canon, Dom Diégo, accompanied him."

"Yes, sir, he was furious; he declared that he was acquainted with the French law; that it would not permit such things; that it was abduction of a minor, and that they were searching on all sides for your nephew."

"That is what I expected, and I exacted from my nephew, not only that he would not see Dolores again until all was arranged, but that he would keep himself concealed in order to escape the pursuit which I hoped to quiet. Now I do not know if I can succeed; the situation is grave. I have told Horace so, but the deed was done, and I confess I revolted against the thought of placing this poor Dolores myself in the hands of the canon, a kind of gluttonous, superstitious brute, from whom there is nothing to hope."

"Ah, doctor, I am now well enough acquainted with

Mlle. Dolores to be sure that she will die of grief if she is left in that convent, and believe me, sir, in the scene of this morning, that which most distresses me is not the scandal of which my poor house has been the theatre, but the thought of the sad future which is perhaps reserved for that unhappy child. And now that I know all, doctor, I am all the more troubled in thinking of the grave consequences that this abduction may entail upon your nephew."

"I share your fears most keenly, my dear Madame Dupont. After a discovery that I have this morning made, I am afraid that a complaint has already been instituted against Horace; if it has not been it will be, to-day perhaps, for now that Dolores is again in the power of her uncle, if he can have my nephew arrested he will have nothing to fear from his love for Dolores. Ah, this arrest would be dreadful! Law is inflexible. My nephew went by night to a convent and abducted a minor. It is liable to infamous punishment, and for him that would be worse than death!"

"Great God!"

"And his brothers and sisters who love him so much! What sorrow for me, — for our family!" added the old man, with sadness.

"But, sir, there ought to be something we can do to put a stop to this pursuit."

"Ah, madame, dear Madame Dupont," replied the doctor, overcome with emotion, "I lose my head when I think of the terrible consequences which may result from this foolish adventure of a young man."

"But what shall we do, doctor, what shall we do?"

"Ah, do I know myself what to do, my poor Madame Dupont? I am going to reflect on the best course to pursue, but I am dealing with such a powerful adversary that I dare not hope for success." And Doctor Gasterini left the Faubourg Poissonnière in a state of inexpressible anxiety.

CHAPTER VI.

THE day after Dolores Salcedo had been taken back to the convent, the following scene took place in the home of the canon, Dom Diégo, who lodged in a comfortable apartment engaged for him before his arrival by Abbé Ledoux.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning.

Dom Diégo, reclining in a large armchair, seemed to be assailed by gloomy thoughts. He was a large man of fifty years, and of enormous obesity; his fat, bloated cheeks mingled with his quadruple chin, his dingy skin was rough and flabby, and revealed the weakness of the inert mass. His features were not wanting in a kind of good-humour, when they were not under the domination of some disagreeable idea. His large mouth and thick, hanging under-lip denoted sensuality. With half-closed eyes under his heavy gray eyebrows, and hands crossed upon his Falstaff stomach, whose vast rotundity was outlined beneath a violet-coloured morning-gown, the canon sighed from time to time in a mournful and despondent tone.

"More appetite, alas! more appetite!" murmured he. "Too many tossings of the sea have upset me. My stomach, so stout, so regular in its habits, is distracted like a watch out of order. This morning, at breakfast, ordinarily my most enjoyable meal, I have hardly eaten at all. Everything seemed insipid or bitter. What will it be at dinner, oh, what will it be at dinner, a repast which I make almost always without hunger in order to take and taste the delicate flower of the best things?

Ah, may that infernal Captain Horace be cursed and damned! The horrible regimen to which I was subjected during that long voyage cost me my appetite; my stomach was irritated and revolted against those execrable salt meats and abominable dry vegetables. So, since this injury done to the delicacy of its habits, my stomach pouts and treats me badly, as if it were my fault, alas! It has a grudge against me, it punishes me, it looks big before the best dishes!

"But who knows if the hand of Providence is not there? Now that I do not feel the least hunger I realise that I have abandoned myself to a sin as detestable as — delectable. Alas! gluttony! Perhaps Providence meant to punish me by sending this miserable Captain Horace on my route. Ah, the scoundrel, what evil has he done! And this was not enough; he abducted my niece, he plunged me in new tribulations; he upset my life, my repose. I, who only asked to eat with meditation and tranquillity! Oh, this brigand captain! I will have my revenge. But whatever may be my revenge, double traitor, I cannot return to you the twentieth part of the evil that I owe you. Because here are two months that I have lost my appetite, and if I should live one hundred years, I should never catch up with those two months of enforced abstinence!"

This dolorous monologue was interrupted by the entrance of the canon's majordomo, an old servant with gray hair.

"Well, Pablo," said Dom Diégo to him, "you come from the convent?"

"Yes, sir."

"And my unworthy niece?"

"Sir, she is in a sort of delirium, she has a hot fever; sometimes she calls for Captain Horace with heartrending cries, sometimes she invokes death, weeping and sobbing. I assure you, sir, it is enough to break your heart."

Dom Diégo, in spite of his selfish sensuality, seemed at first touched by the majordomo's words, but soon he cried:

"So much the better! Dolores only has what she deserves. This will teach her to fall in love with the most detestable of men. She will remain in the convent, she shall take the veil there. My excellent friend and companion, Abbé Ledoux, is perfectly right; by this sample of my niece's tricks I shall know what to expect, if I keep her near me, — perpetual alarms and insults until I had her married, well or ill. Now to cut short all this the Senora Dolores will take the veil, and accomplish her salvation; my wealth will some day enrich the house, where they will pray for the repose of my soul, and I will be relieved of this she-devil of a niece, — three benefits for one."

"But, my lord, if the condition of the senora requires —"

"Not a word more, Pablo!" cried the canon, fearing he might be moved to pity in spite of himself. "Not a word more. Have I not, alas! enough personal troubles without your coming to torture me, to irritate me, with contradictions?"

"Pardon, sir, then, I wish to speak to you of another thing."

"Of what?"

"There is a man in the antechamber who desires to speak with you."

"Who is this man?"

"An old man, well dressed."

"And what does this man want?"

"To talk with you, sir, upon a very important affair. He has brought with him a large box that a porter has just delivered. It seems very heavy."

"And what is this box, Pablo?"

"I do not know, sir."

"And the name of this man?"

"Oh, a very strange name."

"What?"

"Appetite, sir."

"What! this man's name is Appetite?"

"Yes, sir."

"You must have misunderstood him."

"No, sir, I made him repeat his name twice. It is certainly Appetite."

"Alas, alas! what a cruelly ironical name!" murmured the canon, with bitterness. "But no matter, for the rarity of the name, send this man in to me."

An instant after the man announced by the major-domo entered, respectfully saluted Dom Diégo, and said to him:

"It is Lord Dom Diégo whom I have the honour of addressing?"

"Yes, what do you wish of me?"

"First, sir, to pay you the tribute of my profound admiration; then, to offer you my services."

"But, monsieur, what is your name?"

"Appetite, sir."

"Do you write your name as appetite, the desire for food, is written?"

"Yes, sir, but I confess that it is not my name, but my surname."

"To deserve such a surname you ought to be eminently well endowed by nature, M. Appetite; you ought to enjoy an eternal hunger," said the canon, with a sigh of regretful envy.

"On the contrary, I eat very little, sir, as almost all those who have the sacred mission of making others eat."

"How? What, then, is your profession?"

"Cook, sir, and would like the honour of serving you, if I can merit that felicity."

The canon shook his head sadly, and hid his face in his hands; he felt all his griefs revive at the proposition of M. Appetite, who went on to say:

"My second master, Lord Wilmot, whose stomach was so debilitated that for almost a year he ate without pleasure, and even without knowing the taste of different dishes, literally devoured food the first day I had the honour of serving him. It was he who, through gratitude, gave me the name of Appetite, which I have kept ever since."

The canon looked at his visitor attentively, and replied:

"Ah, you are a cook? But tell me, you have spoken to me of paying me the tribute of your admiration and of offering me your services, where were you acquainted with me?"

"You have, sir, during your sojourn in Madrid, often dined with the ambassador of France."

"Oh, yes, that was my good time," replied Dom Diégo, with sadness. "I rendered ample justice to the table of the ambassador of France, and I have proclaimed the fact that I knew of no better practitioner than his chef."

"And this illustrious practitioner, with whom, my lord, I am in correspondence, that we may mutually keep pace with the progress of the science, has written to me to express his joy at having been so worthily appreciated by a connoisseur like yourself. I had taken note of your name, and yesterday, learning by chance that you were in search of a cook, I come to have the honour of offering you my services."

"And from whom do you come, my friend?"

"For ten years, my lord, I have worked only for myself, that is to say, for art. I have a modest fortune, but enough, so it is not a mercenary motive which brings me to you, sir."

"But why do you offer your services to me, rather than to some one else?"

"Because, being free to choose, I consult my convenience; because I am very jealous, my lord, horribly jealous."

"Jealous; and of what?"

"Of my master's fidelity."

"What, the fidelity of your master?"

"Yes, my lord; and I am sure you will be faithful, because you live alone, without family, and, by condition as well as character, you have not, like so many others, all sorts of inclinations which always bore or annoy one; as a serious and convinced man, you have only one passion, but profound, absolute, and that is gluttony. Well, this passion, I offer, my lord, to satisfy, as you have never been satisfied in your life."

"You talk of gold, my dear friend, but do you know that, to make good your claims, in the use of such extravagant language, you must have great talent, — prodigious talent?"

"This great, this prodigious talent I have, my lord."

"Your avowal is not modest."

"It is sincere, and you know, sir, that one may employ a legitimate assurance, from the consciousness of his power."

"I like this noble pride, my dear friend, and if your acts respond to your words, you are a superior person."

"Sir, put me to trial to-day, this hour."

"To-day, this hour!" cried the canon, shrugging his shoulders. "You do not know, then, that for two accursed months I have been in this deplorable state; that there is nothing I can taste; that this morning I have left untouched a breakfast ordered from Chevet, who supplies me until my kitchen is well appointed. Ah, if you did not have the appearance of an honest man, I would think you came to insult my misery, — proposing to cook for me when I am never the least hungry."

"Sir, my name is Appetite."

"But I repeat to you, my dear friend, that only an hour ago I refused the choicest things."

"So much the better, my lord, I could not present my-

self to you at a more favourable juncture; my triumph will be great."

"Listen, my dear friend, I cannot tell you if it is the influence of your name, or the learned and exalted manner with which you speak of your art, which gives me confidence in you, in spite of myself; but I experience, I will not say, a desire to eat, because I would challenge you to make me swallow the wing of an ortolan; but indeed I experience, in hearing you reason upon cooking, a pleasure which makes me hope that perhaps, later, if appetite returns to me, I —"

"My lord, pardon me if I interrupt you; you have a kitchen here?"

"Certainly, with every appointment. A fire has just been kindled there to keep warm what was brought already prepared from Chevet, but, alas! utterly useless."

"Will you give me, sir, a half-hour?"

"What to do?"

"To prepare a breakfast for you, sir."

"With what?"

"I have brought all that is necessary."

"But what is the good of this breakfast, my dear friend? Go, believe me, and do not compromise a talent in which I am pleased to believe, by engaging in a foolish, impossible undertaking."

"Sir, will you give me a half-hour?"

"But I ask again, for what good?"

"To make you eat an excellent breakfast, sir, which will predispose you for a still better dinner."

"That is folly, I tell you; you are mad."

"Try, my lord; what do you risk?"

"Go on, then, you must be a magician."

"I am, sir, perhaps," replied the cook, with a strange smile.

"Very well, bear then the penalty of your own pride," cried Dom Diégo, ringing violently. "If you are instantly overwhelmed with humiliation, and are

compelled to confess the impotence of your art, it is you who would have it. Take care, take care."

"You will eat, my lord," replied the artist, in a professional tone; "yes, you will eat, and much, and deliciously."

At the moment the cook pronounced these rash words the majordomo, called by the sound of the bell, entered.

"Pablo," said the canon, "open the kitchen to this man, and lay a cover for me. Justice must be done."

"But, sir, this morning —"

"Do as I tell you, conduct M. Appetite to the kitchen, and if he has need of help, let some one help him."

"I have need of no one, sir, I am accustomed to work alone in my laboratory. I ask of you permission to shut myself in."

"Have all that you wish, my dear friend, but may I be for ever damned for my sins if I swallow a mouthful of what you are going to serve me. I understand myself, I think, and there is really an overweening pride in you —"

"It is half-past eleven, my lord," said the cook, interrupting Dom Diégo, with majesty; "when the clock strikes noon you will breakfast."

And the artist went out, accompanied by the majordomo.

CHAPTER VII.

After the disappearance of M. Appetite, this strange cook who offered his services with such superb assurance, the canon, left alone, said to himself, as he rose painfully from his chair and walked to and fro with agitation:

"The arrogant self-confidence of this cook confounds me and impresses me in spite of myself. But if he thinks he is dealing with a novice in the knowledge of dainty dishes, he has made a mistake, and I will make him see it. Well, what a fool I am to be so much disturbed! Can any human power give me in five minutes the hunger that has failed me for two months? Ah, that accursed Captain Horace! What a pleasure it would be to me to put him under lock and key! To think that the only nourishment he would have would be the nauseous diet given to prisoners, watered by a glass of blue wine, as rough to the throat as a rasp, and as sour as spoiled vinegar. But bah! This scoundrel, accustomed, doubtless, to the frequent privations endured by mariners, is capable of being indifferent to such a martyrdom, and of preserving his insolent appetite, while I — Ah, if this cook has not told me a lie! But, no, no, like all the French he is braggart, he is full of pride! And yet his assurance seems to me conscientious. He has something, too, in his look, in his countenance, expressive of power. But, in fact, what is this man? Where does he come from? Can I trust myself to his sincerity? I recall now that, when I spoke to him of the impossibility of reviving my appetite, he replied, with

a significant bow: 'My lord, perhaps I am a magician.' If there are magicians they are the sons of the evil spirit, and God keep me from ever meeting them! This man must be a real magician if he makes me eat. Alas, I am a great sinner! Satan takes all sorts of forms, and if — Oh, no, no, I shudder at the very thought! I must turn away from such doleful meditations!"

Then, after a moment's silence, the canon added, as he looked at his watch:

"See, it will soon be noon. In spite of myself, the nearer the fatal hour comes, the more my anxiety increases. I feel a strange emotion, I can admit it to myself. I am almost afraid. It seems to me that this man at this very hour is surrendering himself to a mysterious incantation, that he is plotting something superhuman, because to resurrect the dead and resurrect my appetite would be to work the same miracle. And this wonderful man has undertaken to work this miracle. And if he does, must I not recognise his supernatural power? Come, come, I am ashamed of this weakness. Well, I am indifferent, I prefer not to be alone, because the nearer the hour the more uncomfortable I am. I must ring for Pablo. (He rings.) Yes, the silence of this dwelling, the thought that this strange man is there in that subterranean kitchen, bending over his blazing furnace, like some bad spirit occupied with his sorcery, — all that gives me a strange sensation. Ah, so Pablo does not hear!" cried the canon, now at the highest pitch of uneasiness.

And he rang the bell again, violently.

Pablo did not appear.

"What does that mean?" murmured Dom Diégo, looking around him in dismay. "Pablo does not come! What a frightful and gloomy silence! Oh, something wonderful is happening! I dare not take a step."

Turning his ear to listen, the canon added:

"What is that hollow sound? Nothing human. Some one is coming. Ah, I have not a drop of blood in my veins!"

At this moment the door opened so violently that the canon screamed and hid his face in his hands, as he gasped the words:

"*Vade — retro — Satanas!*"

It was not Satan by any means, but Pablo, the majordomo, who, not having answered the two calls of the bell, was running precipitately, and thus produced the noise that the superstitious imagination of the canon transformed into something mysterious and supernatural.

The majordomo, struck with the attitude of the canon, approached him, and said:

"Ah, my God, what is the matter with you, my lord?"

At the voice of Pablo, Dom Diégo dropped his fat hands, which covered his face, and his servant saw the terror depicted in the master's countenance.

"My lord, my lord, what has happened?"

"Nothing, poor Pablo, — a foolish idea, which I am ashamed of now. But why are you so late?"

"Sir, it is not my fault."

"How is that?"

"I wished, sir, from curiosity, to enter this kitchen to see the work of this famous cook."

"Very well, Pablo?"

"After I assisted him in carrying his box, this strange man ordered me out of the kitchen, where he wished, he said, to be absolutely alone."

"Ah, Pablo, how he surrounds himself with mystery!"

"I obeyed, my lord, but I could not resist the temptation to stay outside at the door."

"To listen?"

"No, sir, to scent."

"Well, Pablo?"

"Ah, my lord, my lord!"

"What is it, Pablo?"

"Little by little an odour passed through the door, so delicious, so exquisite, so tempting, so exciting, that it was impossible for me to go away. If I had been nailed to the door I could not have been more immovable. I was bewildered, fascinated, entranced!"

"Truly, Pablo?"

"You know, my lord, that you gave me the excellent breakfast they brought to you this morning."

"Alas! yes."

"That breakfast I have eaten, my lord."

"Happy Pablo!"

"Well, sir, this odour of which I tell you was so appetising that I felt myself seized with a furious hunger, and, without leaving the door, I took from one of the shelves of the pantry a large piece of dry bread."

"And you ate it, Pablo?"

"I devoured it, my lord."

"Dry?"

"Dry," replied the majordomo, bowing his head.

"Dry!" cried the canon, raising his hands and eyes to heaven. "It is a miracle! He breakfasted an hour ago like an ogre, and now he has just bolted a piece of dry bread!"

"Yes, my lord, this dry bread, seasoned with that juicy odour, seemed to me the most delicious of morsels."

At this moment the clock struck noon.

"Noon!" cried the majordomo. "This marvellous cook instructed me to serve you, my lord, at noon precisely. The cover is already laid on the little table. I am going to bring it."

"Go, Pablo," said the canon, with a meditative air. "My destiny is about to be accomplished. The miracle, if it is a miracle, is going to be performed, — if it is to be performed; for I swear, in spite of all you have just told me, I have not the least appetite. I have a heavy

stomach and a clammy mouth. Go, Pablo, I am waiting."

There was a resignation full of doubt, of curiosity, of anguish, and of vague hope, in the accent with which Dom Diégo uttered the words, "I am waiting."

Soon the majordomo reappeared.

He walked with a solemn air, bearing on a tray a little chafing-dish of silver, the size of a plate, surmounted with its stew-pan. On the side of the tray was a small crystal flagon, filled with a limpid liquid, the colour of burnt topaz.

Pablo, as he approached, several times held his nose to the edge of the stew-pan to inhale the appetising exhalations which escaped from it; finally, he placed on the table the little chafing-dish, the flagon, and a small card.

"Pablo," asked the canon, pointing to the chafing-dish, surmounted with its pan, "what is that silver plate?"

"It belongs to M. Appetite, sir; under this pan is a dish with a double bottom, filled with boiling water, because this great man says the food must be eaten burning hot."

"And that flagon, Pablo?"

"Its use is marked on the card, sir, which informs you of all the dishes you are going to eat."

"Let me see this card," said the canon, and he read:

"'Guinea fowl eggs fried in the fat of quails, relieved with a gravy of crabs.

"'N. B. Eat burning hot, make only one mouthful of each egg, after having softened it well with the gravy.

"'Masticate *pianissimo*.

"'Drink after each egg two fingers of Madeira wine of 1807, which has made five voyages from Rio Janeiro to Calcutta. (It is needless to say that certain wines are vastly improved by long voyages.)

"'Drink this wine with meditation.

"'It is impossible for me not to take the liberty to accompany each dish which I have the honour of serving Lord Dom Diégo with a flagon of wine appropriate to the particular character of the aforesaid dish.'"

"What a man!" exclaimed the majordomo, with an expression of profound admiration, "he thinks of everything!"

The canon, whose agitation was increasing, lifted the top of the silver dish with a trembling hand.

Suddenly a delicious odour spread itself through the atmosphere. Pablo clasped his hands, dilating his wide nostrils and looking at the dish with a greedy eye.

In the middle of the silver dish, half steeped in an unctuous, velvety gravy of a beautiful rosy hue, the majordomo saw four little round soft eggs, that seemed still to tremble with their smoking, golden frying.

The canon, struck like his majordomo with the delicious fragrance of the dish, literally ate it with his eyes, and for the first time in two months a sudden desire of appetite tickled his palate. Nevertheless, he still doubted, believing in the deceitful illusion of a false hunger. Taking in a spoon one of the little eggs, well impregnated with gravy, he shovelled it into his large mouth.

"Masticate *pianissimo*, my lord!" cried Pablo, who followed every motion of his master with a beating heart. "Masticate slowly, the magician said, and afterward drink this, according to the directions."

And Pablo poured out two fingers of the Madeira wine of 1807, in a glass as thin as the peel of an onion, and presented it to Dom Diégo.

Oh, wonder! Oh, marvel! Oh, miracle! The second movement of the mastication *pianissimo* was hardly accomplished when the canon threw his head gently back, and, half shutting his eyes in a sort of ecstasy, crossed his two hands on his breast, still holding in one hand the spoon with which he had just served himself.

"Well, my lord?" said Pablo, with keen interest, as he presented the two fingers of Madeira wine, "well?"

The canon did not reply, but took the glass eagerly and carried it to his lips.

"Above all, sir, drink with meditation," cried Pablo, a scrupulous observer of the cook's order.

The canon drank, indeed, with meditation, then clapped his tongue against his palate, and, if that can be said, listened an instant to relish the flower of the wine which mingled so marvellously with the after-taste of the dish he had just tasted; then, without replying to the interrogations of Pablo, he ate *pianissimo* the three last Guinea fowl eggs, with a pensive and increasing delectation, emptied the little flagon of Madeira wine, and, — must we confess the dreadful impropriety? — he actually dipped his bread so scrupulously into every drop of the crab gravy in which the eggs were served that the bottom of the silver dish soon shone with an immaculate lustre.

Then addressing his majordomo for the first time, Dom Diégo exclaimed, in a tender voice, while tears glittered in his eyes:

"Ah, Pablo!"

"What is the matter, my lord? This emotion —"

"Pablo, I do not know who it is has said that great joys have something melancholy in them; whoever did say it has not made a mistake, because, from the infirmity of our nature, we often sink under the weight of the greatest felicities. Now, for the first time in two months, I can really say I eat, and I eat as I have never eaten in my life. No, no, human language, you must see, my dear Pablo, cannot express the luxury, the exquisite delicacy of this dish, so simple in appearance, Guinea fowl eggs fried in the fat of quail, watered with gravy of crabs. No, for you see, in proportion as I relish them I felt my appetite renew itself, and at present I am much more hungry than before I ate. And this wine, Pablo, this wine, how it melts in the mouth, hey?"

"Alas! my lord," said the majordomo, with a woeful face, "I do not know even the taste of this wine, but I am glad to believe you."

"Oh, yes, believe me, my poor Pablo; it is dry and velvety at the same time, — what shall I say? a nectar! and if you only knew, Pablo, how admirably the flavour of this nectar mingles with the perfume of the crab gravy! It is ideal, Pablo, ideal, I tell you, and I ought to be radiant, crazy with joy in the recovery of my lost appetite, — well, no, I feel myself overcome with an inexpressible tenderness; in fact, I weep like a child! Pablo, do you see it? I am weeping, I am hungry!"

A bell sounded.

"What is that, Pablo?"

"It is he, my lord."

"Who?"

"The great man! he is ringing for us."

"He?"

"Yes, my lord," replied Pablo, removing the dish. "He declares that those who eat should be at the call of those who prepare their food, for only the latter know the hour, the minute, the instant each dish ought to be served and tasted so as not to lose one atom of its worth."

"What he has said is very deep! He is right. Run, then, Pablo. My God! he is ringing again! I hope he has not taken offence. Go quick, quick!"

The majordomo ran, and, let us confess the impropriety, the poor creature, instigated by a consuming curiosity, dared to lick the dish he carried with desperate greediness, although the canon had left it absolutely clean. The ever increasing impatience with which the canon looked for the different dishes, always unknown to him beforehand, can be imagined.

Each service was accompanied with an "order," as Pablo called it, and a new flagon of wine, drawn, no doubt, from the cellar of this wonderful cook.

A collection of these culinary bulletins will give an idea of the varied delights enjoyed by Dom Diégo.

After the note which announced the Guinea fowl eggs, the following menu was served, in the order in which we present it:

"Trout from the lake of Geneva with Montpellier butter, preserved in ice.

"Envelope each mouthful of this exquisite fish, hermetically, in a layer of this highly spiced seasoning.

"Masticate *allegro*.

"Drink two glasses of this Bordeaux wine, Sauterne of 1834, which has made the voyage from the Indies three times.

"This wine should be *meditated*."

"A painter or a poet would have made an enchanting picture of this trout with Montpellier butter preserved in ice," said the canon to Pablo. "See there, this charming little trout, with flesh the colour of a rose, and a head like mother-of-pearl, voluptuously lying on this bed of shining green, composed of fresh butter and virgin oil congealed by ice, to which tarragon, chive, parsley, and water-cresses have given this bright emerald colour! And what perfume! How the freshness of this seasoning contrasts with the pungency of the spices which relieve it! How delicious! And this wine of Sauterne! As the great man of the kitchen says, how admirably this ambrosia is suited to the character of this divine trout which gives me a growing appetite!"

After the trout came another dish, accompanied with this bulletin:

"Fillets of grouse with white Piedmont truffles, minced raw.

"Enclose each mouthful of grouse between two slices of truffle, and moisten the whole well with sauce à la Perigueux, with which black truffles are mingled.

"Masticate *forte*, as the white truffles are raw.

"Drink two glasses of this wine of Château-Margaux 1834, — it also has made a voyage from the Indies.

"This wine reveals itself in all its majesty only in the after-taste."

These fillets of grouse, far from appeasing the growing appetite of the canon, excited it to violent hunger, and, in spite of the profound respect which the orders of the great man had inspired in him, he sent Pablo, before another ringing of the bell, in search of a new culinary wonder.

Finally the bell sounded.

The majordomo returned with this note, which accompanied another dish:

"Salt marsh rails roasted on toast à la Sardanapalus.

"Eat only the legs and rump of the rails; do not cut the leg, take it by the foot, sprinkle it lightly with salt, then cut it off just above the foot, and chew the flesh and the bone.

"Masticate *largo* and *fortissime;* eat at the same time a mouthful of the hot toast, coated over with an unctuous condiment made of the combination of snipe liver and brains and fat livers of Strasburg, roebuck marrow, pounded anchovy, and pungent spices.

"Drink two glasses of Clos Vougeot of 1817.

"Pour out this wine with emotion, drink it with religion."

After this roast, worthy of Lucullus or Trimalcyon, and enjoyed by the canon with all the intensity of unsatisfied hunger, the majordomo reappeared with two side-dishes that the menu announced thus:

"Mushrooms with delicate herbs and the essence of ham; let this divine mushroom soften and dissolve in the mouth.

"Masticate *pianissimo.*

"Drink a glass of the wine Côte-Rôtie 1829, and a glass of Johannisberg of 1729, drawn from the municipal vats of the burgomasters of Heidelberg.

"No recommendation to make for the advantage of the wine, Côte-Rôtie; it is a proud, imperious wine, it asserts itself. As for the old Johannisberg, one hundred and forty years old, approach it with the veneration which a centenarian inspires; drink it with compunction.

"Two sweet side-dishes.

"Morsels à la duchesse with pineapple jelly.

"Masticate *amoroso*.

"Drink two or three glasses of champagne dipped in ice, dry Sillery the year of the comet.

"Dessert.

"Cheese from Brie made on the farm of Estonville, near Meaux. This house had for forty years the honour of serving the palate of Prince Talleyrand, who pronounced the cheese of Brie the king of cheeses, — the only royalty to which this great diplomatist remained faithful unto death.

"Drink a glass or two of Port wine drawn from a hogshead recovered from the great earthquake of Lisbon.

"Bless Providence for this miraculous salvage, and empty your glass piously.

"N. B. Never fruits in the morning; they chill, burden, and involve the stomach at the expense of the repose of the evening; simply rinse the mouth with a glass of cream from the Barbadoes of Madame Amphoux, 1780, and take a light siesta, dreaming of dinner."

It is needless to say that all the prescriptions of the cook were followed literally by the canon, whose appetite, now a prodigious thing, seemed to increase in proportion as it was fed; finally, having exhausted his glass to the last drop, Dom Diégo, his ears scarlet, his eyes softly closed, and his cheeks flushed, commenced to feel the tepid moisture and light torpor of a happy and easy digestion; then, sinking into his armchair with a delicious languor, he said to his majordomo:

"If I were not conscious of a tiger's hunger, which

threatens explosion too soon, I would believe myself in Paradise. So, Pablo, go at once for this great man of the kitchen, this veritable magician; tell him to come and enjoy his work; tell him to come and judge of the ineffable beatitude in which he has plunged me, and above all, Pablo, tell him that if I do not go myself to testify my admiration, my gratitude, it is because —"

The canon was interrupted by the sight of the culinary artist, who suddenly entered the room, and stood face to face with Diégo, staring at him with a strange expression of countenance.

CHAPTER VIII.

At the sight of the cook, who wore, according to the habit of his profession, a white vest and a cotton cap, — the ancient and highly classic schools of Laguipierre, Morel, and Carême remained faithful to the cotton cap, the young romantic school adopting the toque of white muslin, — Canon Dom Diégo rose painfully from his arm-chair, made two steps toward the culinary artist, with his hands extended, and cried, in a voice full of emotion:

"Welcome, my saviour, my friend, my dear friend! Yes, I am proud to give you this title; you have deserved it, because I owe you my appetite, and appetite is happiness, — it is life!"

The cook did not appear extremely grateful for the friendly title with which the canon had honoured him; he remained silent, his arms crossed on his breast, and his gaze fixed on Dom Diégo, but the latter, in the fiery ardour of gastronomic gratitude, did not observe the sardonic smile, — we would almost say Satanic smile, — which played upon the lips of the great man of the kitchen, and so continued the expression of his gratitude:

"My friend," pursued the canon, "from this day you are mine; your conditions will be mine. I am rich; good cheer is my only passion, and for you I will not be a master, but an admirer. Never, my friend, never, have you been better appreciated. You have told me yourself you work only for art, and you prove it, for I declare openly you are the greatest master cook of the world. The miracle that you have wrought to-day, not

only in restoring my appetite, but in increasing it as I tasted your masterpieces (even at this hour I feel able to enjoy another breakfast), this miracle, I say, places you outside of the line of ordinary cooks. We will never part, my dear friend; all that you ask I will grant; you can take other assistants, other subalterns, if you desire to do so. I wish to spare you all fatigue; your health is too precious to me to permit you to compromise it, for henceforth, — I feel it there," and Dom Diègo put his fat hand on his stomach, — "henceforth, I shall not know how to live without you, and — "

"So," cried the cook, interrupting the canon, and smiling with a sarcastic air, "so you have breakfasted well, my lord canon?"

"Have I breakfasted well, my dear friend! Let me tell you I owe you the enjoyment of an hour and a quarter. An inexpressible enjoyment, without intermission except when your services were interrupted, and these intermissions were filled with delight. Hovering between hope and remembrance, was I not expecting new pleasures with an insatiable longing? You ask me if I have breakfasted well! Pablo will tell you that I have wept with tenderness. That is my reply."

"I have been permitted, my lord, to send you some wines as accompaniments, because good dishes without good wines are like a beautiful woman without soul. Now, have you found these wines palatable, my lord?"

"Palatable! Great God, what blasphemy! Inestimable samples of all known nectars — palatable! Wines whose value could not be paid, if you exchanged them, bottle for bottle, with liquid gold — palatable! Come now, my dear friend, your modesty is exaggerated, as you seemed a moment ago to exaggerate your immense talent. But I recognise the fact that, if your genius should be boasted to hyperbole, there would still remain more than half untold."

"I have still more wine of this quality," said the

cook, coldly; "for twenty-five years I have been preparing a tolerable cellar for myself."

"But this tolerable cellar, my dear friend, must have cost you millions?"

"It has cost me nothing, my lord."

"Nothing."

"They are all so many gifts to my humble merit."

"I am by no means astonished, my dear friend, but what are you going to do with this cellar, which is rich enough to be the envy of a king? Ah, if you desired to surrender to me the whole, or a part of it, I would not hesitate to make any sacrifice for its possession; because, as you have just said with so much significance, good dishes without good wines are like a beautiful woman without soul. Now, these wines accompany your productions so admirably that — I —"

The cook interrupted Dom Diégo with a sarcastic, sneering laugh.

"You laugh, my friend?" said the canon, greatly surprised. "You laugh?"

"Yes, my lord, I laugh."

"And at what, my friend?"

"At your gratitude to me, my lord canon."

"My friend, I do not understand you."

"Ah, Lord Dom Diégo! you believe that your good angel — and I picture him to myself, fat and chubby, dressed as I am, like a cook, and wearing pheasant wings on the back of his white robe! — ah, you believe, I say, my lord canon, that your good angel has sent me to you!"

"My dear friend," said Dom Diégo, stretching his large eyes, and feeling very uncomfortable on account of the cook's sardonic humour, "my dear friend, I pray you, explain yourself clearly."

"My lord canon, this day will prove a fatal one for you."

"Great God! what do you say?"

"My lord canon!" replied the cook, his arms crossed and his eyes fixed in a threatening manner on the canon.

And he took a step toward Dom Diégo, who recoiled from him with an expression of pain.

"My lord canon, look at me well."

"I — I — am looking at you," stammered Dom Diégo, "but — "

"My lord canon, my face shall pursue you everywhere, in your sleep and in your waking hours! You shall see me always before you, with my cotton cap and white jacket, like a terrible and fantastic apparition."

"Ah, my God! it is all up with me!" murmured the canon, terrified. "My presentiments did not deceive me; this appetite was too miraculous, these dishes, these wines, too supernatural not to have some awful mystery, some infernal magic in them."

Just at this critical moment the canon fortunately saw his majordomo enter.

"My lord," said Pablo, "the lawyer has just arrived; you know the lawyer who — "

"Pablo, stop there!" cried Dom Diégo, seizing his majordomo by the arm and drawing him near to himself. "Do not leave me."

"My God, sir! what is the matter?" said Pablo. "You seem to be frightened."

"Ah, Pablo, if you only knew," said Dom Diégo, in a low, whining voice, without daring to turn his eyes away from the cook.

"My lord," replied Pablo, "I told you the lawyer had arrived."

"What lawyer, Pablo?"

"The one who comes to draw up in legal form your demand for the arrest of Captain Horace, guilty of the abduction of Senora Dolores."

"Pablo, it is impossible to occupy myself now with business. I have no head — I must be dreaming. Ah,

if you only knew what had happened! This cook — oh, my presentiments!"

"Then, my lord, I am going to send the lawyer away."

"No!" cried the canon, "no, it is this miserable Captain Horace who is the cause of all my ills. If he had not destroyed my appetite, I should have already breakfasted this morning when this tempter in a white jacket introduced himself here, and I would not have been the victim of his sorcery. No," added Dom Diégo, in a paroxysm of anger, "tell this lawyer to wait; he shall write my complaint this very hour. But first let me get out of this awful perplexity," added he, throwing a frightened glance at the silent and formidable cook. "I must know what this mysterious being wants of me to terrify me so. Tell the lawyer to enter my study, and do not leave me, Pablo."

The majordomo went to say a few words outside of the door to the lawyer, who entered an adjacent room, and the canon, the majordomo, and the cook remained alone.

Dom Diégo, encouraged by the presence of Pablo, tried to reassure himself, and said to the man in the white jacket, who still preserved his unruffled and sardonic demeanour:

"See, my good friend, let us talk seriously. It is neither a question of good or of bad angels, but of a man who possesses tremendous talent, — I am speaking of you, — whom I would like to attach to my household at whatever price it may cost. We were discussing the cellar of divine wines, for the acquisition of which I would esteem no sacrifice too much. I speak to you with all the sincerity of my soul, my dear and good friend; reply to me in the same way."

Then the canon whispered to his majordomo:

"Pablo, do you stand between him and me."

"Then," replied the cook, "I will speak to you with

equal sincerity, my lord canon, and first, let me repeat, I will be the desolation, the despair of your life."

"You?"

"I."

"Pablo, do you hear him? What have I done to him? My God!" murmured Dom Diégo, "what grudge has he?"

"Remember well my words, my lord canon. In comparison with the marvellous repast I have served you, the best dishes will seem insipid, the best wines bitter, and your appetite, awakened a moment by my power, will be again destroyed when I am no longer there to resurrect it."

"But, my friend," cried the canon, "you are thinking then of —"

The man in the cotton cap and white jacket again interrupted the canon and said:

"In recalling the delicacies which I have made you enjoy a moment, you will be like the fallen angels, who recall the celestial joys of paradise only to regret them in the midst of lamentation and gnashing of teeth."

"My good friend, I pray you one word!"

"You will gnash your teeth, canon!" cried the cook, in a solemn voice, which sounded in the depths of Dom Diégo's soul like the blast of the trumpet of the last judgment. "You will be as a soul, — no, you have no soul, you will be like a stomach, scenting, hunting, touching all the choicest dishes that can be served, and crying with terrible groanings as you recall this morning's breakfast: 'Alas! alas! my appetite has passed like a shadow; those exquisite dishes I will taste no more! alas! alas!' Then in your despair you will become lean, — do you hear me, canon? — you will become lean."

"Great God! Pablo, what is this wretched man saying?"

"Until the present, in spite of your loss of appetite, you have lived upon your fat, like rats in winter, but

henceforth you will suffer the double and terrible blow of the loss of appetite and the ceaseless regrets that I will leave to you. You will become lean, canon, yes, your cheeks will be flabby, your triple chin will melt like wax in the sun, your enormous stomach will become flat like a leather bottle exhausted of its contents, your complexion, so radiant to-day, will grow yellow under the constant flow of your tears, and you will become lean, scraggy, and livid as an anchorite living on roots and water, — do you hear, canon?"

"Pablo," murmured Dom Diégo, shutting his eyes, and leaning on his majordomo, "support me. I feel as if I were struck with death. It seems to me I see my own ghost, such as this demon portrays. Yes, Pablo, I see myself lean, scraggy, livid. Oh, my God! it is frightful! it is horrible! It is the divine punishment for my sin of gluttony."

"My lord, calm yourself," said the majordomo.

And addressing the cook with mingled fear and anger, he said:

"Do you undertake to tyrannise over such an excellent and venerable a man as the Lord Dom Diégo?"

"And now," continued the cook, pitilessly, "farewell, canon, farewell for ever."

"Farewell, farewell for ever," cried Dom Diégo, with a violent start, as if he had received an electric shock. "What! can it be true? you will abandon me for ever. Oh, no, no, I see all now: in making me regret your loss so deeply, you wish to put your services at a higher price. Well, then, speak, how much must you have?"

"Ah, ah, ah, ah!" shouted the man with the cotton cap and white jacket, bursting into Mephistophelian laughter, and walking slowly toward the door.

"No, no," cried the canon, clasping his hands; "no, you will not abandon me thus, — it would be atrocious, it would be savage, it would be to leave an unfortunate

traveller in the middle of a burning desert, after having given him the delight of an oasis full of shade and freshness."

"You ought to have been a great preacher in your time, canon," said the man in the white jacket, continuing his march toward the door.

"Mercy, mercy!" cried Dom Diégo, in a voice choked with tears. "Ah, indeed, it is no longer the artist, the cook of genius with whom I plead; it is the man,—it is to one like myself that I bend the knee,—oh, see me, and beseech him not to leave a brother in hopeless woe."

"Yes, and see me at your knees, too, my lord cook!" cried the worthy majordomo, excited by the emotion of his master, and like him, falling on his knees; "a very humble poor creature joins his prayer to that of the Lord Dom Diégo. Alas! do not abandon him, he will die!"

"Yes," replied the cook, with a Satanic burst of laughter, "he will die, and he will die lean."

The last sarcasm changed the despair of Dom Diégo to fury. He rose quickly, and, notwithstanding his obesity, threw himself upon the cook, crying:

"Come to me, Pablo; the monster shall not cook for anybody, his death only can deliver me from his infernal persecution!"

"My lord," cried the majordomo, less excited than his master, "what are you doing? Grief makes you wild."

Fortunately, the man in the white jacket, at the first aggressive movement of Dom Diégo, recoiled two steps, and put himself in a defensive attitude by means of a large kitchen knife which he brandished in one hand, while in the other he held a sharp larding-pin.

At the sight of the formidable knife and larding-pin, drawn like a dagger, the murderous exasperation of the canon was dispelled; but the violence of his emotions,

the heat of his blood, and the state of his digestion produced such a revolution that he tottered and fell unconscious in the arms of the majordomo, who, too weak to sustain such a weight, himself sank to the floor, screaming with all his strength:

"Help! help!"

Then the man in the white jacket disappeared, with a last resounding burst of laughter which would have done honour to Satan himself, and terrified the majordomo almost to death.

CHAPTER IX.

MANY days had elapsed since the canon, Dom Diégo, had been so mercilessly abandoned by the strange and inimitable cook of whom we have spoken.

In the home of the Abbé Ledoux, the following scene occurred between him and the canon.

The threatening predictions of the great cook were beginning to be realised. Dom Diégo, pale, dejected, with a complexion yellowed by abstinence, — for all dishes seemed to him tasteless and nauseating since the marvellous breakfast of which he constantly dreamed, — would scarcely have been recognised. His enormous stomach had already lost its rotundity, and the poor man, whose physiognomy and attitude betrayed abject misery, responded in a mournful tone to the questions of the abbé, who, walking up and down the parlour in the greatest agitation, addressed him in a rude and angry tone:

"In truth, you have not the least energy, Dom Diégo; you have fallen into a desperate state of apathy."

"That is easy for you to say," murmured the canon, in a grieved tone. "I would like very much to see you in my place, alas!"

"Oh, come now, this is shameful!"

"Abuse me, abbé, curse me; but what do you want? Since this accursed man has abandoned me I live no longer, I eat no longer, I sleep no longer! Ah, he well said, 'My memory and my face will pursue you everywhere, canon!' In fact, I am always thinking of the Guinea fowl eggs, the trout, and the roast à la Sardana-

palus. And he, I see him always and everywhere in his white jacket and cotton cap. It is like a hallucination. To-night, even, yielding myself to a feverish, nervous slumber, I dreamed of this demon."

"Better and better, canon."

"What a nightmare! My God! what a horrible nightmare! He had served me with one of those exquisite, divine dishes, which he alone has the genius to produce, and he said to me, with his sardonic air, 'Eat, canon, eat.' It was, I recollect, — I see it still, — a delicious reed-bird with orange sauce. I had a devouring appetite; I took my knife and fork to carve the adorable little bird; I was carving it into slices, golden outside and rosy within, and veined with such fine, delicate fat. A thousand little drops of rosy juice appeared on the flesh, like so many drops of dew, to such a point was it roasted. I steeped it in several spoonfuls of orange sauce whose flavour tickled my palate, before I tasted it. I took on the end of my fork a royal mouthful; I opened my mouth. Suddenly the ferocious laughter of my executioner resounded, and horror! I had on the end of my fork only a great piece of rancid, glutinous, infected yellow bacon. 'Eat, canon, why do you not eat?' repeated this accursed man, in his strident voice. 'Why do you not eat?' And in spite of myself, in spite of my terrible repugnance, I ate! Yes, abbé, I ate this disgusting bacon. Oh, when I think of it, — bah! it was horrible. And I awoke, bathed in tears. Night before last another odious dream. It was about eel-pout livers, and —"

"Go to the devil, canon!" cried the abbé, already provoked by this recital of Dom Diégo's gastronomic nightmare, "you are enough to damn a saint with your maudlin prattle."

"Prattle!" cried the canon, in despair. "What! here for eight days I have been able to swallow only a few spoonfuls of chocolate, — so faint, so disheartened

am I. What! I have had the fortitude to pass two hours seated in the museums of Chevet and Bontoux, those famous cooks, hoping that perhaps the sight of their rare collections of comestibles would excite in me some desire of appetite, — and nothing, nothing. No, the recollection of that celestial breakfast was there, always there, annihilating everything by the sole power of a cherished memory. Ah, abbé, abbé, I have never loved, but since these three days I comprehend all that is exclusive in love; I comprehend how a man passionately in love remains indifferent to the sight of the most beautiful creature in the world, dreaming, alas! — three times alas! — only of the adored object which he regrets."

"But, canon," said the abbé, looking at Dom Diégo with anxiety, "do you know that all this will result in delirium — in insanity?"

"Eh, my God! I know it well, abbé, I am losing my head. This cursed seducer has carried away my life and thought with him. In the street, I gaze into the faces of all who pass, in the hope of meeting him. Great God! if this good luck would only happen! Oh, he would not be insensible to my prayers. 'Cruel, perfidious man,' I would say, 'look at me. See on my features the mark of my sufferings! Will you be without pity? No, no; mercy, mercy!'"

And the canon, falling back in his armchair, covered his face with his hands and burst into sobs.

"My God! my God! how wretched I am!" he cried.

"What a double brute! He will be a fool, if he is not one already," said the abbé to himself. "I will not complain of it, because, his insanity once established, he will not leave our house, and whether it is he or his niece little matters."

The abbé approached the canon with compunction, and said to him, gently:

"Come, my brother, be reasonable, calm yourself,

perhaps we ought to see in what has happened the punishment of Heaven."

"I think with you, abbé, this tempter came from hell. It is not given to any human being to be such a cook. Ah, abbé, I must be a great sinner, for my punishment is terrible!"

"You have indeed surrendered yourself, without measure, without restraint, to one of the foulest of the capital sins, — gluttony, my dear brother, — and I repeat to you Heaven punishes you, as is its law, in the very thing by which you have sinned."

"But after all, what is my crime? I have simply used the admirable gifts of the Creator, for in fact it is not I who, in order to enjoy them, have created pheasants, ortolans, fat livers, salmon trout, truffles, oysters, lobsters, wines, and —"

"My brother, my brother!" cried the abbé, interrupting this appetising enumeration, "your words savour of materialism, pantheism, heresy! You are not in a state of mind to listen to me as I refute these impious, abominable systems which lead directly to paganism. But there is one indisputable fact, which is, that you suffer, my brother, you suffer cruelly; it is for us to bind up your wounds, my tender brother, it is for us to comfort them with balm and honey."

At these words the canon made an involuntary grimace, because, in his gastronomic monomania, the idea of honey and balm was especially distasteful.

The abbé continued:

"Let us see, my dear brother, let us return to the cause of all your ills."

"Alas! abbé, it is the loss of my appetite."

"Be it so, my brother, and who has caused the loss of your appetite?"

"That wretch!" cried the canon, irritated, "that infamous Captain Horace."

"That is true; well, I will always preach to you the

forgiveness of injuries, my dear brother; but, too, I must recommend to you an inexorable severity against sacrilege."

"What sacrilege, abbé?"

"Have not Captain Horace and one of his sailors dared to leap over the sacred walls of the convent where you had shut up your niece? Have they not had the audacity to carry away the miserable girl, whom happily we have recaptured? This enormity in other times might have been punished with fire, and one day it will be punished with eternal fire."

"And this villain of a captain will only have what he deserves," cried Dom Diégo, ferociously; "yes, he will cook — he will roast on Satan's spit by a slow fire, all eternity, where he will be moistened with gravy of melted lead, after having been larded with red-hot iron. Such will be his punishment, I earnestly hope."

"So may it be, but while waiting this eternal expiation, why not punish him here below? Why have you had the culpable weakness to give up your demand for the arrest of this miscreant? I need not remind you that this man is the first cause of all that you call your ills, — that is, the loss of your appetite."

"That is true, he is a great criminal."

"Then, my brother, why, I ask again, have you been so weak as to renounce your pursuit of him? You do not reply, you seem to be embarrassed."

"It is that —"

"It is what?"

"Alas, abbé, you are going to scold me, to lecture me again."

"Explain yourself, my brother."

"What shall I say? It is his fault, for, since he has disappeared, all my thoughts come from him and return to him."

"Who, he?"

"This angel or this demon."

"What angel — what demon?"

"The cook."

"Again the cook?"

"Always!"

"Come," said the abbé, shrugging his shoulders, "do explain yourself, my brother."

"Well, then, abbé, know that the day after the fatal day when I breakfasted as I shall never breakfast again, alas! when my despair was at its height, I received a mysterious note."

"And what did this contain, my brother?"

"Here it is."

"You have kept it."

"It is perhaps his cherished handwriting," murmured the canon, with a melancholy accent.

And he handed the note to Abbé Ledoux, who read as follows:

"My Lord Canon: — There remains perhaps one means of seeing me again.

"You now know the delights with which I am able to surfeit you.

"You also know the terrible torments which my absence inflicts.

"Before yesterday, not having felt these torments in all their anguish, you presumed to refuse what I expected of you.

"To-day, as past sufferings will be a guarantee for the sufferings to come, listen to me.

"You can put an end to these sufferings.

"For that, you must grant me three things.

"I demand the first to-day; in eight days the second; in fifteen days the third.

"I proportion the importance of my demands to the progress of your suffering, because the more you suffer, the more you will regret me and show yourself docile.

"Here is my first demand:

"Send back by the bearer of this note, your nonsuit of all complaint against Captain Horace.

"Give me by this act a proof of your desire to satisfy me, and then you will be able to hope that you may find again APPETITE."

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Abbé Ledoux had finished reading this note, he reflected a moment in silence, while the canon, repeating the last words of the letter, said, bitterly:

"'And you will be able to hope to find Appetite!' What cruel irony in this pitiless pun!"

"That is singular," said the abbé, thoughtfully. "Did you see the bearer of this note, Dom Diégo?"

"Did I see him? Could I lose this opportunity to speak of *him?*"

"Well?"

"Ah, well, one would have thought I was speaking Hebrew to this animal. To my most pressing questions, he responded with a stupid air. I was not able to draw from him either the address or the name of the person who had sent me the note."

"And so, canon, it is in obedience to this letter that you have renounced your complaint against this renegade Captain Horace."

"Yes, because I hoped, by my deference to the desires of him who holds my life in his hands, to soften his heart of stone, but alas! this concession has not touched him."

"But what relations can exist between this accursed cook and Captain Horace?" said Abbé Ledoux, still absorbed in thought. "Some intrigue is hidden there."

Then after another silence he added:

"Dom Diégo, listen to me; I will not tell you to abandon the hope that some day you may have in your

service this cook whom you prize so highly. I shall not insist upon the dangers which threaten your eternal salvation in consequence of your persistent and abominable gluttony; you are at this moment in such a state of excitement that you would not comprehend it."

"I fear so, abbé."

"I am sure of it, canon. I will deal then with you as we deal, permit me to say it, with monomaniacs. I will for the present put myself in your place, extraordinary as it may seem, and I must tell you that you have done exactly the contrary of what you ought to have done, if you wish to gain power over this man, who, as you say, controls your destiny."

"Explain yourself, my dear abbé."

"After all you have confided to me, evidently this cook has no need of a position; having learned of your favourite vice, he has only sought a pretext for introducing himself into your house; his connivance with Captain Horace only proves, do you not see, that their plan was arranged beforehand, and they proposed to use your love of eating as a means of gaining influence over you."

"Great God!" cried Dom Diégo, "that is a ray of light!"

"Do you confess your blindness now?"

"What an infernal plot! What atrocious Machiavellism!" murmured the canon, thoroughly frightened.

Then he added, with a sigh of dejection, full of bitterness:

"Such dissimulation! Such perfidy united to such beautiful genius! Oh, humanity! Oh, humanity!"

"Let me continue," replied the abbé. "You have already, by your unworthy weakness, deprived yourself of one of the three means by which you might have controlled this great cook, since, as he has had the effrontery to warn you beforehand, there are yet two others he intends to exact from you, and he counts on your deplorable readiness to yield, to obtain them. Now,

this end once attained, he will laugh at you, and you will see him no more."

"Abbé, that is impossible."

"Why?"

"I tell you, abbé, such treason is impossible. You surely do not believe that men are ferocious beasts, — monsters."

"I believe, canon," replied the abbé, with a shrug of the shoulders, "I believe that a cook who gives gratis wines at one or two louis a bottle —"

"Wait, pray," interrupted Dom Diégo. "Neither one, nor two, nor six louis would pay the cost of such wines. They were nectar, abbé, they were ambrosia, I tell you!"

All the more reason, canon; a cook who is so prodigal of such costly ambrosia has no need of hiring himself for wages, I imagine."

"I not only offered him wages, I offered him, also, my friendship, — think of it, abbé, I said to this perfidious monster, 'Friend, I will not be your master, I will be your admirer.'"

"You see that he cared as little for your friendship as for your admiration."

"Ah, that would be an ingrate, indeed!"

"That may be; but if you wish, in your turn, to put this ingrate at your feet, there is a way for you to do so."

"To put him at my feet! Oh, abbé, if you could work this miracle! but, no, no, you are without pity, you play upon my credulity."

"The miracle is very simple; refuse absolutely all that this man demands of you, because if he has no need of your friendship or your admiration, he has evidently great need of your leaving off your suit against this Captain Horace. Refuse that, and you will hold your man. I do not know for how long a time you will hold him, but you will hold him. We will see afterward how to

prolong your power. I am, you see, a man of wise counsel."

"Abbé, you open my eyes, you are right; in refusing his demands, I shall force him to return to me."

"Well, do you agree to it?"

"I was blind, silly! But what do you want, abbé? Despair, inanition! The stomach reacts so terribly on the brain. Ah, why was I so weak as to sign this nonsuit?"

"It is time to recall it."

"You think so, abbé?"

"I am certain of it. I know persons who are very influential with the magistracy."

"What an opportunity, abbé, what an opportunity!"

"We have friends everywhere. Now, listen to what is necessary for you to do. You go at once and present your complaint in legal form; we will attest it immediately at the bar of the king's attorney. We will say to him that the other day when you were in a condition of suffering and wholly irresponsible, you signed the nonsuit, but reflecting upon the sacrilegious crime of Captain Horace, you would fail in your double character of canon and guardian if you did not deliver this criminal to the rigour of the law. Begin by this act of decision and you will soon see this insolent cook, who dictates his orders to you, humble and submissive to your will."

"Abbé, dear abbé, you have saved my life."

"Wait, that is not all. This mysterious unknown, who interests himself so much in Captain Horace, must also interest himself in the captain's marriage with your niece. Evidently this intrigue concerns that, because, understand me, I wager a hundred to one that one of the two things which this impertinent cook reserves to ask of you is your consent to this marriage."

"What a depth of villainy!" cried the canon. "What diabolical plotting! There is no longer room for doubt,

abbé, such was the plan of this miserable creature. Oh, if in my turn I could only get him in my power!"

"The way is very easy, and whatever may be the cause of it, after the various ramifications of this dark intrigue, of which your niece is the end, you must see that there would be grave dangers in leaving her in Paris, and whatever course you may take in regard to this —"

"She shall enter a convent," interrupted the canon, "that is my intention at all hazards; she has already caused me enough worry, enough care. I do not like to play the rôle of a guardian in a comedy."

"Your niece, then, will enter a convent; but to leave her in Paris is to expose her to the plotting of Captain Horace and his friends, and you know their audacity. Perhaps they will abduct her a second time. Imagine what new sorrow that would bring to you."

"But where shall I send this accursed girl?"

"Let her depart for Lyons to-day, even; we have an excellent house in that city, once entered there it would be impossible for her to communicate with the outside. Now, see what we are going to do. The first thing is to go at once to the Palais de Justice; there I shall find an influential person who will recommend me to the king's attorney, in whose hands you will lodge your complaint. After that we will hasten to the convent; among the livery hacks there is always a carriage ready for an emergency; one of our sisters and a steady and resolute man will accompany your niece; you will give your orders to them; in two hours she will be on the route to Lyons, and before the end of the day Captain Horace will be locked in jail, because, as he believes your complaint is withdrawn, he will come out of the retreat which we have not been able to discover. Once this miscreant arrested, and your niece out of Paris, you will see my Lord Appetite run to you, and with a little address — I will help you if you wish it — you will have

him at your mercy, and can do with him as you please."

"Dear abbé, you are my saviour!" cried the canon, rising from his seat, his face radiant with hope. "You are a superior man; Father Benoit told me so in Cadiz. Let us go, let us go. I abandon myself blindly to your counsels; everything tells me they are excellent, and that they will place him, who is an angel and a demon to me, in my power for ever."

"Let us go, then, my dear Dom Diégo," said the abbé, hastily putting on his hat, and dragging the canon by the arm.

The moment the canon opened the door of the parlour, he found himself face to face with Doctor Gasterini, who familiarly entered the saintly man's house without announcement.

The abbé was just going to address a word to the doctor, when at a cry from the canon he turned abruptly and saw Dom Diégo, pale, motionless, his gaze fixed, and his hands clasped, and his face expressing all the contradictions of stupor, doubt, anguish, and hope. Finally, addressing the abbé, who comprehended nothing of this sudden emotion, the canon pointed to the doctor and stammered, in a broken voice, "It — is — he."

But Dom Diégo was not able to say more, and overcome by emotion he sat down heavily in a chair, closed his eyes, and fell over in utter weakness.

"The devil! the canon here!" said Doctor Gasterini to himself. "Cursed accident!"

Abbé Ledoux, at the sight of Dom Diégo's collapse, — a pathetic picture, — turned to the doctor, and said:

"I think, really, the canon must be ill. What is the matter with him? Your arrival is fortunate, my dear doctor; wait, — here is a vial of salts, it will assist his breathing."

Hardly was the bottle placed to the nostrils of the canon when he sneezed violently, with a cavernous bel-

lowing, then coming out of his fainting fit, but not having the strength to rise, he turned his languid eyes, suffused with tears, to the doctor, and said, with an accent which he wished to be stern, but which was only tender:

"Ah, cruel man!"

"Cruel!" said the abbé, bewildered, "why do you call the doctor cruel, Dom Diégo?"

"Yes," interposed the physician, perfectly calm and smiling, "what cruelty can you accuse me of, sir?"

"You ask that, you ingrate!" said the canon. "You dare ask that!"

"What! you call the doctor an ingrate!" said the abbé.

"The doctor!" said the canon, "what doctor?"

"Why, my friend, the man to whom you are speaking," said the abbé, "my friend standing there, Doctor Gasterini."

"He!" cried the canon, rising abruptly. "I tell you that is my tempter, my seducer!"

"The devil! he sees him everywhere," said the abbé, impatiently. "I repeat it to you that the gentleman is Doctor Gasterini, my friend."

"And I repeat to you, abbé," cried Dom Diégo, "that the gentleman is the great cook of whom I have spoken to you!"

"Doctor," said the abbé, earnestly, "in the name of Heaven, do explain this blunder."

"There is no blunder at all, my dear abbé."

"What?"

"The canon speaks the truth," replied Doctor Gasterini. "Day before yesterday I had the pleasure of preparing a dish for him; for, in order to have the honour of calling yourself a glutton, you must have a practical acquaintance with the culinary art.

CHAPTER XI.

THE abbé, amazed, looked at Doctor Gasterini, unable to believe what he had heard; at last he said:

"What! you, doctor, have cooked dishes for Dom Diégo? You! you?"

"Yes, I, my dear abbé."

"A doctor," exclaimed the canon, in his turn amazed, "a physician?"

"Yes, canon," replied Doctor Gasterini, "I am a physician, which does not prevent my being a passable cook."

"Passable!" cried the canon, "say rather, divine! But what means this —"

"I comprehend all!" replied Abbé Ledoux, after having remained silent and thoughtful a moment, "the plot was skilfully contrived."

"What is it that you comprehend, abbé? Of what plot are you talking?" said the canon, who, after his first astonishment, began to wonder how a physician could be such an extraordinary cook. "I pray you explain yourself, abbé!"

"Do you know, Dom Diégo," asked the abbé, with a bitter smile, "who Doctor Gasterini is?"

"But," stammered the canon, wiping the perspiration from his brow, for he had been making superhuman efforts to penetrate the mystery, "everything is so complicated — so strange — that —"

"Doctor Gasterini," cried the abbé, "is the uncle of Captain Horace! Do you understand now, Dom Diégo, the diabolical trick the doctor has played you? Do you under-

stand that he has played upon your deplorable gluttony in order to get such a hold on you that he might induce you to abandon your pursuit of Captain Horace, his nephew, and afterward to induce you to consent to the marriage of your niece and the captain? Do you understand at last to what point you have been duped? Do you see the depth of the abyss you have escaped?"

"My God! this great cook a doctor! And he is the uncle of Captain Horace!" murmured the canon, stunned by the revelation. "He is not a real cook! Oh, illusion of illusions!"

The doctor remained silent and imperturbable.

"Hey, have you been duped enough?" asked the abbé. "Have you played a sufficiently ridiculous rôle? And do you now believe that the illustrious Doctor Gasterini, one of the princes of science, who has fifty thousand a year income, would hire himself to you as a cook? Was I wrong in saying that you had been made a scoff and jeer for other persons' amusement?"

Every word from the abbé exasperated the anger, the grief, and the despair of the canon. The last remark above all. "Do you think the celebrated Doctor Gasterini would hire himself for wages," gave a mortal blow to the last illusions that Dom Diégo cherished. Turning to the doctor, he said, with an ill-concealed anger:

"Ah, sir, do you recollect the evil you have done me? I may die of it, perhaps, but I will have my revenge, if not on you, at least on that rascal, your nephew, and on my unworthy niece, who, no doubt, is also in this abominable intrigue!"

"Well, courage, Dom Diégo; this righteous vengeance will not tarry," said Abbé Ledoux.

Then he turned to the doctor, and said, sarcastically:

"Ah, doctor, you are doubtless a very shrewd, clever man, but you know the best players sometimes lose the best games, and you will lose this one!"

"Perhaps," said the doctor, smiling; "who knows?"

"Come, my dear abbé, come," cried the canon, pale and exasperated; "come, let us see the king's attorney, and then we will hasten the departure of my niece."

And, turning to the doctor, he said:

"To employ arms so perfidious, so disloyal! to deceive a confiding and inoffensive man with this odious Machiavellism! I who have eaten with my eyes shut, I who have taken delight upon the very brink of an abyss! Ah, sir, it is abominable, but I will have my revenge!"

"And this very instant," said the abbé. "Come, Dom Diégo, follow me. A thousand pardons, my dear doctor, to leave you so abruptly, but you understand moments are precious."

The canon, boiling with rage, was about to follow the abbé when Doctor Gasterini said, in a calm voice:

"Canon, a word if you please."

"If you listen to him, you are lost, Dom Diégo!" cried the abbé, dragging the canon with him. "The evil spirit himself is not more insidious than this infernal doctor. Decide for yourself after the trick he has played on you. Come, come!"

"Canon," said the doctor, seizing Dom Diégo by the right sleeve, while the abbé, who held the worthy man by the left sleeve, was using every effort to force him to follow him. "Canon," repeated the doctor, "just one word, I pray you."

"No, no!" said the abbé, "let us flee, Dom Diégo, let us flee this serpent tempter."

And the abbé continued to pull the canon by his right sleeve.

"Just a word," said the physician, "and you will see how much this dear abbé deceives you in my place."

"The Abbé Ledoux deceives me in your place! That is too much by far!" cried Dom Diégo. "How, sir, do you dare?"

"I am going to prove to you what I say, canon," said the doctor, earnestly, as he saw Dom Diégo make an

effort to approach him. The abbé, suspecting the canon's weakness, pulled him violently, and said:

"Recollect, unhappy man, that your mother Eve was lost by listening to the first word of Satan. I adjure you, I command you, to follow me this instant! If you give way, unhappy man, take care! One second more, and it is all up with you. Let us go, let us go!"

"Yes, yes, you are my saviour, take me away from here," stammered the canon, disengaging himself from the grasp of the doctor. "In spite of myself, I am already yielding to the incomprehensible influence of this demon. I recall those Guinea fowl eggs with crab gravy, that trout with frozen Montpellier butter, that celestial roast à la Sardanapalus, and already a dim hope — let us fly, abbé, it is time, let us fly."

"Canon," said the doctor, holding on to the arm of Dom Diégo with all his strength, "listen to me, I pray you."

"*Vade retro, Satanas!*" cried Dom Diégo, with horror, escaping from the doctor's hands.

And dragged along by the abbé, he was on the threshold of the door, when the physician cried:

"I will cook for you as much as you desire, and as long as I shall live, Dom Diégo. Grant me five minutes, and I will prove what I declare. Five minutes, what do you risk?"

At the magic words, "I will cook for you as much as you desire," the canon seemed nailed to the door-sill, and did not advance a step, in spite of the efforts of the abbé, who was too exhausted to struggle against the weight of such a large man.

"You certainly are stupid!" cried the abbé, losing control of himself, "what a fool you are to have any dealings with him!"

"Grant me five minutes, Dom Diégo," urged the doctor, "and, if I do not convince you of the reality of my promises, then give free course to your vengeance. I re-

peat, what do you risk? I only ask a poor five minutes."

"In fact," said the canon, turning to the abbé, "what would I risk?"

"Go, you risk nothing!" cried the abbé, pushed to the extreme by the weakness of the canon; "from this moment you are lost, a scoff and a jeer. Go, go, throw yourself into the jaws of this monster, thrice dull brute that you are!"

These unfortunate words, uttered by the abbé in anger, wounded the pride of Dom Diégo to the quick, and he replied, with an offended air:

"At least, I will not be brute enough, Abbé Ledoux, to hesitate between the loss of five minutes, and the ruin of my hopes, as weak as they may be."

"As you please, Dom Diégo," replied the abbé, gnawing his nails with anger; "you are a good, greasy dupe to experiment upon. Really, I am ashamed of having pitied you."

"Not such a dupe, Abbé Ledoux, not such a dupe as you may suppose," said the canon, in a self-sufficient tone. "You are going to discover, and the doctor, too, for no doubt he is going to explain himself."

"At once," eagerly replied the doctor, "at once, my lord canon, and very clearly too, very categorically."

"Let us see," said Dom Diégo, swelling cheeks with an important air. "You discover, sir, that I have now powerful reasons for not allowing myself to be satisfied with chimeras, because, as the abbé has said, I would be a good, greasy dupe to permit you to deceive me, after so many cautions."

"Oh, certainly," said the abbé, in his great indignation, "you are a proud man, canon, and quite capable of fighting this son of Beelzebub."

"By which title you mean me, dear abbé," said the doctor, with sardonic courtesy. "What an ingrate you are! I come to remind you that you promised to dine

with me to-day. Permit my lord canon, also, — he is not a stranger to our subject, as you will see."

"Yes, doctor," said the abbé, "I did make you this promise, but — "

"You will keep it, I do not doubt, and I will remind you, too, that this invitation was extended in consequence of a little discussion relative to the seven capital sins. Again, canon, I am in the question, and you are going to recognise it immediately."

"It is true, doctor," replied the abbé, with a constrained smile, "I would brand, as they deserve to be, the seven capital sins, causes of eternal damnation to the miserable beings who abandon themselves to these abominable vices, and in your passion for paradoxes, you have dared maintain that — "

"That the seven capital sins have good, in a certain point of view, in a certain measure, and gluttony, particularly, may be made an admirable passion."

"Gluttony!" cried the canon, amazed. "Gluttony admirable!"

"Admirable, my dear canon," replied the doctor, "and that, too, in the eyes of the wisest, and most sincerely religious men."

"Gluttony!" repeated the canon, who had listened to the physician with increasing bewilderment, "gluttony!"

"It is even more, my lord canon," said the doctor, solemnly, "because, for those who are to put it in practice, it becomes an imperious duty to humanity."

"A duty to humanity!" repeated Dom Diégo.

"And, above all, a question of high civilisation and great policy, my lord canon," added the doctor, with an air so serious, so full of conviction, that he imposed on the canon, who cried:

"Hold, doctor, if you could only demonstrate that — "

"Do you not see that the doctor is making you ridiculous?" said the abbé, shrugging his shoulders. "Ah, I told you the truth, unhappy Dom Diégo; you are lost,

for ever lost, as soon as you consent to listen to such foolery."

"Canon," the doctor hastened to add, "let us resume our subject, not by reasoning, which, I confess, may appear to you specious, but by facts, by acts, by proofs, and by figures. You are both a glutton and superstitious. You have not the strength to resist your craving for good things; then, your gluttony satisfied, you are afraid of having committed a great sin, which sometimes spoils the pleasure of good cheer, and above all, injures the calmness and regularity of your digestion. Is this not true?"

"It is true," meekly replied the canon, dominated, fascinated by the doctor's words, "it is too true."

"Well, my lord canon, I wish to convince you, I repeat, not by reasoning, however logical it may be, but by visible, palpable facts and by figures, first, that in being a glutton, you accomplish a mission highly philanthropic, a benefit to civilisation and politics; second, that I can, and will be able to make you eat and drink, when you wish, with far more intense enjoyment than the other day."

"And I, I say to you," cried the abbé, appalled by the doctor's assurance, "that if you prove by facts and figures, as you pretend, that to be a glutton is to accomplish a mission to humanity or high civilisation, or is a thing of great political significance, I swear to you to become an adept in this philosophy, as absurd and visionary as it appears."

"And if you prove to me, doctor, that you can open again, and in the future continue to open the doors of the culinary paradise that you opened to me day before yesterday," cried the canon, palpitating with new hope, "if you prove to me that I accomplish a social duty in yielding myself up to gluttony, you will be able to dominate me, I will be your deputy, your slave, your thing."

"Agreed, my lord canon, agreed, Abbé Ledoux, you shall be satisfied. Let us depart."

"Depart?" asked the canon, "where?"

"To my house, Dom Diégo."

"To your house," said the canon, with an air of distrust, "to your house?"

"My carriage is below," replied the doctor; "in a quarter of an hour we will arrive there."

"But, doctor," asked the canon, "why go to your house? What are we going to do there?"

"At my house, only, will you be able to find those visible, palpable proofs of what I have declared, for I have come to remind the dear abbé that to-day is the twentieth of November, the day of the investigation to which I have invited him. But the hour advances, gentlemen, let us depart."

"I do not know if I am dreaming or awake," said Dom Diégo, "but I throw myself in the gulf with my eyes shut."

"You must be the very devil himself, doctor, for my instinct and reason revolt against your paradoxes. I do not believe one word of your promises, yet it is impossible for me to resist the curious desire to accompany you."

The canon and the abbé followed the doctor, entered his carriage with him, and soon the three arrived at the house occupied by the distinguished physician.

CHAPTER XII.

Doctor Gasterini lived in a charming house in the Faubourg du Roule, where he soon arrived in company with the canon and Abbé Ledoux.

"While we are waiting for dinner, would you like to take a turn in the garden?" said the doctor, to his guests. "That will give me the opportunity to present to you my poor sister's eight children, my nephews and nieces, whom I have reared and established in the world respectably, entirely by means of gluttony. You see, canon, we still follow our subject."

"What, doctor!" replied the canon, "you have reared a numerous family by means of gluttony?"

"You do not see that the doctor continues to ridicule you!" said the abbé, shrugging his shoulders. "It is too much by far!"

"I give you my word of honour as an honest man," replied Doctor Gasterini, "and besides, I am going to prove to you in a moment, by facts, that if I had not been the greatest gourmand among men, I should never have known how to make for each one of my nephews and nieces the excellent positions which they hold, as worthy, honest, and intelligent labourers, contributing, each in his sphere, to the prosperity of the country."

"So we are really to see people who contribute to the prosperity of the country, and for that we may thank the doctor's love of eating!" said the canon, with amazement.

"No," cried the abbé, "what confounds me is to hear

such absurdities maintained till the last moment, and —" but suddenly interrupting himself, he asked with surprise, as he looked around:

"What is that building, doctor? It looks like shops."

"That is my orangery," replied the doctor, "and to-day, as every year at this time, my birthday, they set up shops here."

"How is that; set up shops, and what for?" asked the abbé.

"Zounds! why, to sell, of course, my dear abbé."

"Sell what? and who is to sell?"

"As to what is sold, you will soon see, and as to the purchasers, why, they are my patrons, who are coming to spend the evening here."

"Really, doctor, I do not comprehend you."

"You know, my dear abbé, that for a long time charity shops have been kept by some of the prettiest women in Paris."

"Ah, yes," replied the abbé; "the proceeds to be given to the poor."

"This is the same; the proceeds of this evening's sale will be distributed among the poor of my district."

"And who are to keep these shops?" asked the canon.

"My sister's eight children, Dom Diégo. They will sell there, for the charitable purpose I have mentioned, the produce of their own industry. But come, gentlemen, let us enter, and I shall have the honour of introducing to you my nieces and nephews."

With these words Doctor Gasterini conducted his friends into a vast orangery, where were arranged eight little shops or stalls for the display of wares. The green boxes of a large number of gigantic orange-trees formed the railings and separations of these stalls, so that each one had a ceiling of beautiful foliage.

"Ah, doctor," exclaimed the canon, stopping before the first stall in admiration, "this is magnificent! I have never seen anything like it in my life. It is magic!"

"It is indeed a feast for the eye," said the abbé. "It is unsurpassed."

Let us see what elicited the just admiration of Doctor Gasterini's guests. The boxes forming the enclosure of the first stall were ornamented with leaves and flowers; on each of these rustic platforms, covered with moss, a collection of fruits and early vegetables was displayed with rare beauty. Golden pineapples with crowns of green lay above immense baskets of grapes of every shade, from the dark purple cluster of the valley to the transparent red from the mountain vineyards. Pyramids of pears, and apples of the rarest and choicest species, of enormous size and variegated with the brightest colours, reached up to summits of bananas, as golden as if the sun of the tropics had ripened them. Farther on dwarf fig-trees in pots, and covered with violet-coloured figs, stood among a rare collection of autumn melons, Brazil pumpkins, and Spanish and white potatoes. Still farther, little rush baskets of hothouse strawberries contrasted with rosy mushrooms, and enormous truffles as black as ebony, obtained from the hotbed by special culture. Then came the rare and early specimens of the season, — green asparagus and varieties of lettuce.

In the midst of these marvels of the vegetable kingdom, which she herself had grouped in such a charming and picturesque scene, stood a beautiful young woman, elegantly attired in the costume of the peasants living in the neighbourhood of Paris.

"I present to you one of my nieces," said the doctor to his guests, "Juliette Dumont, cultivator of early fruits and vegetables, in the open field and hothouse at Montreuil-sous-Bois."

Then, turning to the young woman, the doctor added:

"My child, tell these gentlemen, please, how many gardeners you and your husband employ in your occupation."

"At least twenty men the whole time, my dear uncle."

"And their salary, my child."

"According to your advice, dear uncle, we give them the fixed price of fifty cents, and a part of our profit, in order to interest them as much as we are in the excellence of the work. We find this arrangement the best in the world, for our gardeners, interested as much as ourselves in the prosperity of our undertaking, labour with great zeal. So this year, their part in the income of the establishment has almost amounted to five francs a day."

"And about how much a year is the whole income, my child?"

"Thanks to our nurseries of fine fruit-trees, we make, dear uncle, from eighty to a hundred thousand francs a year."

"As much as that?" said the abbé.

"Yes, sir," replied the young woman; and there are many houses in the neighbourhood of Paris and in the provinces whose incomes are larger than ours."

The canon, absorbed in the contemplation of fragrant golden fruits, truffles, and mushrooms, and the first vegetables of the season as luscious as they were rare, gave only a distracted attention to the economics of the conversation, and reluctantly accepted the doctor's invitation, who said to him:

"Let us pass to another specimen of the industry of my family, canon, for each one to-day displays his best wares. Now tell me if that jolly fellow over there is not a true artist."

And with these words Doctor Gasterini pointed out the second stall to his guests.

In the middle of an enclosure, carpeted with rushes and seaweeds, three large, white marble tables rose one above the other at an interval of one foot, gradually diminishing in size, like the basins of a fountain. On

these marble slabs, covered with marine herbs, was a fine display of shells, crustaceans, and the choicest and most delicate sea-fish.

On the first slab was a sort of grotto made of shell-work, in which could be seen mussels and oysters from Marennes, Ostend, and Cancale, fattened at an immense expense in the parks. At the base of this slab lobsters, shrimps, and crabs were slowly crawling, or putting out a feeler from under their thick shells.

On the second slab, fringed with long seaweeds of a light green colour, were fish of the most diminutive size and exquisite flavour; sardines gleaming like silver, others of ultramarine blue, others still of bright red, and dainty grill fish with backs as white as snow, and rose-coloured bellies.

Finally, on the last and largest of these marble basins lay, here and there, veritable monsters of the sea, enormous turbots, gigantic salmon, formidable sturgeons, and prodigious tunnies.

A young man with sunburnt complexion, and frank, prepossessing countenance, who recalled the features of Captain Horace, smiled complaisantly at this magnificent exhibition of the products of the sea.

"Gentlemen, I present to you my nephew Thomas, patron of fisheries at Etretat," said Doctor Gasterini to his guests, "and you see that his nets do not bring back sand alone."

"I never saw anything in my life more admirable! I never saw more appetising fish!" exclaimed Dom Diégo, with enthusiasm. "One could almost eat them raw!"

"My boy," said Doctor Gasterini to his nephew, "these gentlemen would like to know how many sailors you patron fishers employ in your boats."

"Each boat employs eight or ten men and a cabin-boy," replied patron Thomas. "You see, my dear uncle, that makes quite a fine array of men, when you think of the number of fishing-boats on the coasts of

France, from Bayonne to Dunkerque, and from Perpignan to Cannes."

"And what pay do these men get, my boy?" asked the doctor.

"We buy boats and nets in common, and divide the produce of the fish, and when a sailor is carried away by a big wave, his widow and children succeed to the father's portion; in a word, we work in an association, all for each, and each for all, and I assure you that when it is necessary to throw our nets or draw them in, to furl a sail or give it to the winds, there is no idler among us. All work with a good heart."

"Very well, my brave boy," said the doctor. "But, my lord canon," added he, turning to Dom Diégo, "as a true gourmand, you shall taste scalloped salmon with truffles, and sole minced in the Venetian style. Here we promote one of the noblest industries of the country, and it also contributes to the amelioration of the condition of our marine service. Let this thought, canon, take possession of your mind when you eat sturgeon baked in its own liquor, flavoured highly with Bayonne ham and oyster sauce, mingled with Madeira wine!"

At these words, Dom Diégo opened mechanically his large mouth and shut it, passing his tongue over his lips, with a sigh of greedy desire.

Abbé Ledoux, too discerning not to comprehend the doctor's intention, betrayed increasing resentment, but did not utter a word. The physician affected not to perceive the vexation of his guest. Taking Dom Diégo by the arm, he said, as he conducted him to the third stall:

"Honestly, my lord canon, did you ever see anything more beautiful, more charming, than this?"

"Never, oh, never!" exclaimed Dom Diégo, clasping his hands in admiration, "although the confections of my country are considered the finest in the world."

Nor was there, indeed, anything more captivating or

more beautiful than this third stall, where was displayed in cups or porcelain dishes everything that the most refined epicureans could imagine in preserves, confections, and sweetmeats. In one place, crystallised sugar enveloped sparkling stalactites of the most beautiful fruits; in another, pyramids of all kinds, variegated with the brightest colours, — red with lozenges of rose, green with frozen pistachios shading into tints of lemon; farther on, oranges, limes, cedras, all covered with a snowy coating of sugar. Again, transparent jellies, made from Rouen apples, and currant jellies from Bar, shone with the prismatic brilliancy of ruby and topaz. Still farther, wide slabs of nougat from Marseilles, white as fresh cream, served as pedestals for columns of chocolate made in Bayonne, and apricot paste from Montpellier. Boxes of preserved fruit from Touraine, as fresh as if they had just been gathered, and in their gorgeous colouring resembling Florentine mosaics, charmed the eyes of the beholder.

A young and pretty woman, a niece of Dr. Gasterini, presided at this exhibition of sweets, and welcomed her uncle with an amiable smile.

"I present to you, gentlemen, my niece Augustine, one of the first confectioners in Paris, a true artist, who carves and paints in sugar, and her masterpieces are literally the crack dainties of Paris; but this specimen of her ability is nothing: in about a fortnight her shop on Vivienne Street will show a fine display, and I am sure you will see there some marvellous productions of her skill."

"Certainly, my dear uncle," replied the smiling mistress of the stall, "we will have the newest sweetmeats, the richest boxes, the most cleverly woven baskets of dainties, and the prettiest little bags, and for all these accessories we have a workshop where we employ thirty artisans, without counting, you understand, all the persons engaged in the laboratory."

"What is the matter with you, my dear abbé?" asked the doctor of this saintly man. "You seem to be quite gloomy. Are you vexed to see that gluttony controls all sorts of industries and productions which count for so much in the commercial progress of France? Zounds, man, you have not reached the end yet!"

"Well, well," replied the abbé, under constraint, "I see what you are coming to, you wicked man, but I will have a response for all. Go on, go on, I do not say a word, but I do not think the less."

"I am at your service for discussion, my dear abbé, but in the meanwhile, my lord canon," continued the doctor, turning to Dom Diégo, "you ought to be already partially convinced, since you see that you can, without remorse, enjoy the rarest fruits, the most delicate fish, and the most delicious sweetmeats. And more, as I have told you before, since you are a rich man, the consumption of these dainties is for you an imperative social duty, for the more you consume the greater impetus you give to production."

"And I realise that in my specialty I am at the height of this noble and patriotic mission!" exclaimed the canon, with enthusiasm. "You give me, dear doctor, the consciousness of duty performed."

"I did not expect less from the loftiness of your soul, my lord canon," replied the physician, "but a day will come when this kind mission of consumer that you accept with such proud interest will be more generally disseminated, and we will talk of that another time, but before passing on to the next stall I must ask your indulgence for my poor nephew Leonard, who presides at the exhibition you are going to see."

"Why my indulgence, doctor?"

"Because, you see, my nephew Leonard follows a rather dangerous calling, but he has followed the bent of his inclination. This devil of a boy has been reared like a savage. Put to nurse with a peasant woman

living on the frontier of the forest of Sénart, he was so puny for a long time that I allowed him to remain in the country until he was twelve years old. The peasant woman's husband was an arrant poacher, and my nephew had his bump for the chase as well developed as a hunting hound. You can judge what his bloodhound propensities would become under the tutelage of such a foster-parent. At the age of six years, sickly as he was, Leonard passed the whole day in the woods, busy with traps for rabbits, hares, and pheasants. At ten years the little man inaugurated his career as a hunter by killing a superb roebuck, one winter night, by the light of the moon. I was ignorant of all that. When, however, he was twelve years old, he seemed to have grown strong enough, and I placed him at school. Three days after, he scaled the walls which surrounded the boarding-school and returned to the forest of Sénart. In a word, canon, nothing has been able to conquer the boy's passion for hunting. And, unfortunately, I confess that I became an accomplice by making him a present of a newly invented gun, so perfect and handy that it would make of you, my dear abbé, as accomplished a hunter as my nephew. He is not alone. Thousands of families live upon the superfluous game of rich proprietors who hunt, not from necessity, but because they find it an amusement. So, my lord canon, in tasting a leg of jerked venison, a hash of young partridge, or a thigh of roasted pheasant, — I could not do you the wrong of supposing you would prefer the wing, — you can assure yourself that you are contributing to the support of a number of poor households."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE doctor, having concluded his eulogy upon the chase, approached his nephew's stall, and, with a significant gesture, pointed out to the canon and the abbé the finest exhibition of game that could be imagined.

The English gamekeepers, great masters of the art of grouping game, thus making real pictures of dead nature, would have recognised the superiority of Leonard.

Imagine a knotty, umbrageous tree six or seven feet high, standing in the middle of this stall. At the foot of the tree were grouped, on a bed of bright green fern, a young wild boar, a magnificent fallow deer, two years old, the proper age for venison, and two fine roebucks. These animals were lying in a restful position, the head gently bent over the shoulder, as if they were in their accustomed haunts in the depths of the forest. Long flexible branches of ivy fell from the lower boughs of the tree, among whose glossy leaves could be seen hares and rabbits, alternating with the wild geese of ashen-gray colour, wild ducks with green heads and feathers tipped with white, pheasants with scarlet eyes and necks of changeable blue and plumage shining like burnished copper; and silver-coloured bustards, a bird of passage quite rare in our climate. Here and there, branches of holly with purple berries, and the rosy bloom of heather mingled gracefully with the game disposed at different heights. Then came groups of woodcocks, gray partridges, red partridges, gold-coloured plovers, water-hens as black as ebony, with yellow beaks; upon the highest boughs the most delicate game was suspended, — quails,

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thrushes, fig-peckers, and rails, those kings of the plain; and finally, at the top of the tree, a magnificent heath-cock, caught, no doubt, in the mountains of Ardennes, seemed to open his broad wings of brown, touched with blue, and hover over this hecatomb of game.

Leonard, an agile, slender lad with a fawn-coloured eye, and frank, resolute face, contemplated his work with admiration, giving here and there a finishing touch, contrasting the red of a partridge with the green branch of a juniper-tree, or the shining ebony of a water-hen with the bright rose of the heather bloom.

"I have informed these gentlemen of your frightful trade, my bad boy," said Doctor Gasterini to his nephew Leonard, with a smile. "My lord canon and the saintly abbé will pray for the salvation of your soul."

"Oh, oh, my good uncle!" replied Leonard, good-naturedly, "I would rather have them pray for success in shooting the two finest deer, as company for the wild boar I have killed, whose head and fillets I present to you, uncle."

"Alas, alas, he is incorrigible!" said Doctor Gasterini, "and unhappily, my lord canon, you have no idea of the deliciousness of the flavour peculiar to the minced fillets and properly stuffed head of a year-old wild boar, seasoned à la Saint Hubert! Ah, my dear canon, how rich, how juicy! It was right to put this divine dish under the protection of the patron saint of the chase. But let us pass on," continued the doctor, preceding Dom Diégo, who was fascinated and dazzled by a display entirely novel to him, for such wealth of game is unknown in Spain.

"Oh, how grand is Nature in her creations!" said the canon; "what a marvellous scale of pleasures for the palate from the monstrous wild boar to the fig-pecker, — that exquisite little bird! Glory, glory to thee, eternal gratitude to thee," added he, in the manner of an ejaculatory prayer.

"Bravo, Dom Diégo!" cried the doctor, "now are you in the right."

"Now he is in materialism, in paganism, and the grossest pantheism," said the intractable abbé. "You will damn him, doctor, you will destroy his soul!"

"Still a little patience, my dear abbé," replied the doctor, walking toward another stall. "Soon, in spite of yourself, you will be convinced that I speak truly in extolling the excellence of gluttony, or rather you will think as I do, although you will take occasion to deny the evidence. Now, canon, you are going to see how this gluttony, so dear to you and me, becomes one of the causes of the progress of agriculture, the real basis of the prosperity of the country. And with this subject let me introduce to you my nephew Mathurin, a tiller of those salt meadows, which nourish the only beasts worthy of the gourmand, and which give him those invaluable legs of mutton, those unsurpassed cutlets, those fillets of wonderful beef which even England envies us. I present to you also my nephew Mathurin's wife, native of Le Mans, and familiar with that illustrious school of fattening animals, which produces those pullets and capons known as one of the glories and riches of France.

The shop of farmer Mathurin was undeniably less picturesque, less pretty, and by no means so showy as the others, but it had, by way of compensation, an attractive and dignified simplicity.

Upon large screens of willow branches, covered with thyme, sage, rosemary, tarragon, and other aromatic herbs, were displayed, in Herculean size, monstrous pieces of beef for roasting, fabulous sirloins, marvellous loins of veal, and those legs and saddles of mutton, and unparalleled cutlets, which have filled the hundred mouths of Rumour with the incomparable flavour of the famous beasts of the salt meadows.

Although raw, this delicious meat, surrounded with sweet and pungent herbs, was so delicate and of such a

tempting red with its fat of immaculate whiteness, that the glances which Dom Diégo threw upon these specimens of bovine and ovine industry, were nothing less than carnivorous. Half hidden among clusters of watercresses was a collection of pullets, capons, pure India cocks, and a species of fowl called tardillons, so round and fat and plump, and with a satin skin of such delicacy, that more than one pretty woman might have envied them.

"Oh, how pretty they are! how lovely they are!" stammered the canon. "Oh, it is enough to make one lose his head!"

"Ah, my dear canon," said the doctor, "pray, what will you say when the charming pallor of these pullets will turn into gold by the fires of the turnspit? when, distended almost to breaking by truffles made bluish under their delicate epidermis, this satin skin becomes rosy until it sheds the tear-drops of purple juice, watered by the slow distillation of its fat, as exquisitely delicate as the fat of a quail."

"Enough, doctor!" cried the canon, excited, "enough, I pray you, of braving scandal. I will attack one of those adorable pullets, without the least respect to its present condition."

"Calm yourself, my Lord Dom Diégo," said the doctor, smiling, "the dinner hour approaches and you can then pay your homage to two sisters of these adorable fowls."

Then, addressing his nephew Mathurin, the doctor said:

"My boy, these gentlemen think the produce of your farm very wonderful."

"The gentlemen are very kind, dear uncle," replied Mathurin, "but it is the cattle of one who chooses and loves the work! I do not fear the English or the Ardennois, upon the flavour of my beef, my veal, or my mutton from the salt meadows which make my reputation and my fortune. Because, you see, gentlemen,

the prime object of agriculture is to make food, as we say. The cattle produce the manure, the manure the pasture, the pasture the fertility of the earth, and the fertility of the earth gives provision and pasturage to the cattle. All is bound together: the more the cattle is finely fattened, the better it is for the eater, according to our proverb; the better it sells, the better is the manure and consequently better is the culture. So with the poultry of Mathurin; without doubt, it is a great expense and requires many persons on the farm, for perhaps, gentlemen, you will not believe that to fatten one of these capons and one of these pullets as you see them here, we must open the beak and, fifteen or twenty times a day, put down the throat little balls of barley flour and milk, and that, too, for three months! But we get a famous product, because each capon brings us more than a weak mutton or veal. But immense care is necessary. So, with the advice of this dear uncle, whose advice is always good, we show every year at Christmas what we do on the farm. In the evening, upon the return of the cattle, the first two beeves which enter the stable, the finest or the poorest, no matter, chance decides it, are set aside; it is the same with the first six calves; afterward, when the cages of the fowls are opened, the first dozen capons, the first dozen pullets, and the first dozen cocks which come out are set aside."

"What good is that?" asked the abbé. "What is done with these animals thus appointed by fate?"

"We make a lot of them and they are sold for the profit of the people on the farm. This profit is in addition to their fixed wages. You understand, gentlemen, that all my people are thus interested in the cattle and the poultry, which receive the best possible care, inasmuch as chance alone decides the lot of *encouragement*, as we call it. What is the result, gentlemen? It is that cattle and poultry become almost as much the property

of my people as mine, because the finer the lot, the dearer it sells, and the larger the profit. Eh, gentlemen, would you believe that, thanks to the zeal, the care and diligence which my farm people give to the hope of this profit, I gain more than I give, because our interest is common, so that in improving the condition of these poor people, I advance my own."

"The moral of all this, my lord canon, is," said the doctor, smiling, "that it is necessary to eat as many fine sirloins as possible, as many tender cutlets from the salt meadows, and give oneself with equal devotion to the unlimited consumption of pullets, capons, and India cocks, so as to encourage this industry."

"I will try, doctor," said the canon, gravely, "to attain to the height of my duties."

"And they are more numerous than you think, Dom Diégo, because it depends upon you too to see that poor people are better clothed and better shod, and to this you can make especial contribution, by eating plenty of veal stewed à la Samaritan, plenty of beefsteak with anchovy sauce, and plenty of lambs' tongues à la d'Uxelle."

"Come now, doctor," said the canon, "you are joking!"

"You are rather slow in discovering that, Dom Diégo," said the abbé.

"I am speaking seriously," replied the doctor, "and I am going to prove it to you, Dom Diégo. What are shoes made of?"

"Of leather, doctor."

"And what produces this leather? Do not beeves, sheep, and calves? It is then evident that the more cattle consumed, the more the price of leather is diminished, and good health-promoting shoes become more accessible to the poor, who can afford only wooden shoes."

"That is true," said the canon, with a thoughtful expression. "It is certainly true."

"Now," continued the doctor, "of what are good

woollen garments and good woollen stockings woven? Of the fleece of the sheep! Now, then, the greater the consumption of mutton, the cheaper wool becomes."

"Ah, doctor," cried the canon, carried away by a sudden burst of fine philosophy, "what a pity we cannot eat six meals a day! Yes, yes, a man could kill himself with indigestion for the greater happiness of his fellow men."

"Ah, Dom Diégo!" replied the doctor, in a significant tone. "Such perhaps is the martyrdom which awaits you!"

"And I shall submit to it with joy," cried the canon, enthusiastically. "It is sweet to die for humanity!"

Abbé Ledoux could no longer doubt that Dom Diégo was wholly beyond his influence, and manifested his vexation by angry glances, and disdainful shrugs of his shoulders.

"Oh, my God, doctor," suddenly exclaimed the canon, expanding his wide nostrils over and over again, "what is that appetising odour I scent there?"

"That is the exhibition of the industry pursued by my nephew Michel, my lord canon; these things are just out of the oven; see what a golden brown they have, how dainty they are!"

And Doctor Gasterini pointed out to the canon, the most marvellous specimens of pastry and bakery that one could possibly imagine: immense pies of game, of fish and of fowl, delicious morsels of baked shell-fish, fruit pies, little tarts with preserves and creams of all sorts, smoking cakes of every description, meringues with pineapple jelly, burnt almonds and sugared nuts, nougats mounted in shape of rocks, supporting temples of sugar candy, graceful ships of candy, whose top of fine spun sugar, resembling filigree work of silver, disclosed a dish of vanilla cakes, floating in rose-coloured cream whipped as light as foam. The list of wonderful

dainties would be too long to enumerate, and Canon Dom Diégo stood before them in mute admiration.

"The dinner hour approaches, and I must go to my stoves, to give the finishing touch to certain dishes, which my pupils have begun," said Doctor Gasterini to his guest. "But to prove to you the importance of this appetising branch of industry, I will limit myself to a single question."

And addressing his nephew Michel, he said:

"My boy, tell the gentleman how much the stock of pastry you exhibit in the street of La Paix has cost."

"You ought to know, uncle," replied Michel, smiling affectionately at Doctor Gasturini, "for you advanced the money necessary for the expenditure."

"My faith, boy, you have reimbursed me long ago, and I have forgotten the figures. Let us see. It was —"

"Two hundred thousand francs, uncle. And I have done an excellent business. Besides, the house is good, because my predecessor made there twenty thousand a year income in ten years."

"Twenty thousand income!" cried Dom Diégo in astonishment, "twenty thousand!"

"Now you see, my lord canon, how capital is created by eating hot pies and plum cake with pistachios. But would you like to see something really grand? For this time we are discussing an industry which affects not only the interests of almost all the counties of France, but which extends over a great part of Europe and the East, — that is to say, Germany, Italy, Greece, Spain, and Portugal. An industry which puts in circulation an enormous amount of capital, which occupies entire populations, whose finest products sometimes reach a fabulous price, — an industry, in short, which is to gluttony what the soul is to the body, what mind is to matter. Wait, Dom Diégo, look and reverence, for here the youngest are already very old."

Immediately, through instinct, the canon took off his hat, and reverently bowed his head.

"I present to you my nephew Theodore, commissary of fine French and foreign wines," said the doctor to the canon.

There was nothing brilliant or showy in this stall; only simple wooden shelves filled with dusty bottles and above each shelf a label in red letters on a black ground, which made the brief and significant announcement:

"*France.* — Chambertin (comet); Clos-Vougeat, 1815; Volney (comet); Nuits, 1820; Pomard, 1834; Châblis, 1834; Pouilly (comet); Château Margot, 1818; Haut-Brion, 1820; Château Lafitte, 1834; Sauterne, 1811; Grave (comet); Roussillon, 1800; Tavel, 1802; Cahors, 1793; Lunel, 1814; Frontignan (comet); Rivesaltes, 1831; Foamy Ai, 1820; Ai rose, 1831; Dry Sillery (comet); Eau de vie de Cognac, 1757; Anisette de Bordeaux, 1804; Ratafia de Louvres, 1807.

"*Germany.* — Johannisberg, 1779; Rudesteimer, 1747; Hocheimer, 1760; Tokai, 1797; Vermouth, 1801; Vin de Hongrie, 1783; Kirchenwasser of the Black Forest, 1801.

"*Holland.* — Anisette, 1821; Curacao red, 1805; White Curacao, 1820; Genievre, 1799.

"*Italy.* — Lacryma Christi, 1803; Imola, 1819.

"*Greece.* — Chypre, 1801; Samos, 1813.

"*Ionian Islands.* — Marasquin de Zara.

"*Spain.* — Val de Penas, 1812; Xeres dry, 1809; Sweet Xeres, 1810; Escatelle, 1824; Tintilla de Rota, 1823; Malaga, 1799.

"*Portugal.* — Po, 1778.

"*Island of Madeira.* — Madeira, 1810; having made three voyages from the Indies.

"*Cape of Good Hope.* — Red and white and pale wines, 1826."

While Dom Diégo was looking on with profound interest, Doctor Gasterini said to his nephew:

"My boy, do you recollect the price at which some celebrated wine-cellars have been sold?"

"Yes, dear uncle," replied Michel, "the Duke of Sussex owned a wine-cellar which was sold for two hundred and eighty thousand francs; Lafitte's wine-cellar sold in Paris for nearly one hundred thousand francs; the one belonging to Lagillière, also in Paris, was sold for sixty thousand francs."

"Well, well, Dom Diégo," said Doctor Gasterini to his guest, "what do you think of it? Do you believe all this to be an abomination, as that wag Abbé Ledoux, who is observing us now with such a deceitful countenance, declares? Do you think the passion, which promotes an industry of such importance, deserves to be anathematised only? Think of the expenditure of labour in their transport and preservation that these wine-cellars must have cost. How many people have lived on the money they represent?"

"I think," said the canon, "that I was blind and stupid never to have comprehended, until now, the immense social, political, and industrial influence I have wielded by eating and drinking the choicest viands and wines. I think now that the consciousness of accomplishing a mission to the world in giving myself up to unbridled gluttony, will be a delicious aperient for my appetite,—a consciousness which I owe to you, and to you only, doctor. Oh, noble thinker! Oh, grand philosophy!"

"This is the science of gastronomy carried to insanity," said Abbé Ledoux. "It is a new paganism."

"My Lord Diégo," continued the doctor, "we will speak of the gratitude which you think you owe me, when we have taken a view of this last shop. Here is an industry which surpasses in importance all of which we have been speaking. The question is a grave one,

for it turns the scale of gluttony's influence upon the equilibrium of Europe."

"The equilibrium of Europe!" said the canon, more and more dismayed. "What has eating to do with the equilibrium of Europe?"

"Go on, go on, Dom Diégo," said Abbé Ledoux, shrugging his shoulders, "if you listen to this tempter, he will prove to you things still more astonishing."

"I am going to prove, my dear abbé, both to you and to Dom Diégo, that I advance nothing but what is strictly true. And, first, you will confess, will you not, that the marine service of a nation like France has great weight in the balance of the destinies of Europe?"

"Certainly," said the canon.

"Well, what follows?" said the abbé.

"Now," pursued the doctor, "you will agree with me, that as this military marine service is strengthened or enfeebled, France gains or loses in the same proportion?"

"Evidently," said the canon.

"Conclude your argument," cried the abbé, "that is what I am waiting for."

"I will conclude then, my dear abbé, by saying that the more progress gluttony makes, the more accessible it becomes to the greatest number, the more will the military marine of France gain in strength and in influence, and that, my Lord Dom Diégo, I am going to demonstrate to you by begging you to read that sign."

And just above the door of this last stall, the only one not occupied by a niece or nephew of Doctor Gasterini, were the words "Colonial Provisions."

"Colonial provisions," repeated the canon aloud, looking at the physician with an interrogating air, while the abbé, more discerning, bit his lips with vexation.

"Do I need to tell you, lord canon, pursued the doctor, "that without colonies, we would have no merchant service, and without a merchant service, no navy for war, since the navy is recruited from the seamen

in the merchant service? Well, if the lovers of good eating did not consume all the delicacies which you see exhibited here in small samples, — sugar, coffee, vanilla, cloves, cinnamon, ginger, rice, pistachios, Cayenne pepper, nutmeg, liquors from the islands, hachars from the Indies, what, I ask you, would become of our colonies, that is to say, our maritime power?"

"I am amazed," cried the canon, "I am dizzy; at each step I feel myself expand a hundred cubits."

"And, zounds! you are right, lord Dom Diégo," said the doctor, "for indeed, when, after having tasted at dessert a cheese frozen with vanilla, to which will succeed a glass of wine from Constance or the Cape, you take a cup of coffee, and conclude of course with one or two little glasses of liquor from the islands, flavoured with cloves or cinnamon, ah, well, you will further heroically the maritime power of France, and do in your sphere as much for the navy as the sailor or the captain. And speaking of captains, lord canon," added the doctor, sadly, "I wish you to observe that among all the shops we have seen, this one alone is empty, because the captain of the ship which has brought all these choice provisions from the Indies and the colonies dares not show himself, while he is under the cloud of your vengeance. I mean, canon, my poor nephew, Captain Horace. He alone has failed to come, to-day, to this family feast."

"Ah, the accursed serpent!" muttered the abbé, "how adroitly he goes to his aim; how well he knows how to wind this miserable brute, Dom Diégo, around his finger."

At the name of Captain Horace, the canon started, then relapsed into thoughtful silence.

CHAPTER XIV.

Canon Dom Diégo, after a few moments' silence, extended his fat hand to Doctor Gasterini, and, trembling with emotion, said:

"Doctor, Captain Horace cost me my appetite; you have restored it to me, I hope, for the remainder of my life; and much more, you have, according to your promise, proven to me, not by specious reasoning, but by facts and figures, that the gourmand, as you have declared with so much wisdom, accomplishes a high social and political mission in the civilised world; you have delivered me from the pangs of remorse by giving me a knowledge of the noble task that my epicureanism may perform, and in this sacred duty, doctor, I will not fail. So, in gratitude to you, in appreciation of you, I hope to acquit myself modestly by declaring to you that, not only shall I refuse to enter a complaint against your nephew, Captain Horace, but I cordially bestow upon him the hand of my niece in marriage."

"As I told you, canon," said the abbé, "I was very sure that once this diabolical doctor had you in his clutches, he would do with you all that he desired. Where now are the beautiful resolutions you made this morning?"

"Abbé," replied Dom Diégo, in a self-sufficient tone, "I am not a child; I shall know how to stand at the height of the rôle the doctor has marked out for me."

Then turning to the doctor, he added:

"You can instruct me, sir, what to write; a reliable person will take my letter, and go immediately in your

carriage to the convent for my niece, and conduct her to this house."

"Lord Dom Diégo," replied the doctor, "you assure the happiness of our two children, the joy of my declining days, and consequently your satisfaction and pleasure in the indulgence of your appetite, for I shall keep my word; I will make you dine every day better than I made you breakfast the other morning. A wing of this house will henceforth be at your disposal; you will do me the honour of eating at my table, and you see that, after the professions I have chosen for my nieces and nephews, — with the knowledge and taste of an epicure, as I have told you, — my larder and my wine-cellar will be always marvellously well appointed and supplied. I am growing old, I have need of a staff in my old age. Horace and his wife shall never leave me. I shall confide to them the collection of my culinary traditions, that they may transmit them from generation to generation; we shall all live together, and we shall enjoy in turn the practice and philosophy of gluttony, my lord canon."

"Doctor, I set my foot upon the very threshold of paradise!" cried the canon. "Ah, Providence is merciful, it loads a poor sinner like myself with blessings!"

"Heresy! blasphemy! impiety!" cried Abbé Ledoux. "You will be damned, thrice damned, as will be your tempter!"

"Come now, dear abbé," replied the doctor, "none of your tricks. Confess at once that I have convinced you by my reasoning."

"I! I am convinced!"

"Certainly, because I defy you — you and all like you, past, present, or future — to get out of this dilemma."

"Let us hear the dilemma."

"If gluttony is a monstrosity, then frugality pushed to the extreme ought to be a virtue."

"Certainly," answered the abbé.

"Then, my dear abbé, the more frugal a man is, according to your theory, the more deserving is he."

"Evidently, doctor."

"So the man who lives on uncooked roots, and drinks water only for the purpose of self-mortification, would be the type and model of a virtuous man."

"And who doubts it? You can find that celestial type among the anchorites."

"Admirable types, indeed, abbé! Now, according to your ideas of making proselytes, you ought to desire most earnestly that all mankind should approach this type of ideal perfection as nearly as possible, — a man inhabiting a cave and living on roots. The beautiful ideal of your religious society would then be a society of cave-dwellers and root-eaters, administering rough discipline by way of pastime."

"Would to God it might be so!" sternly answered the abbé; "there would be then as many righteous on the earth as there are men."

"In the first place that would deplete the census considerably, my dear abbé, and afterward there would be the little inconvenience of destroying with one blow all the various industries, the specimens of which we have just been admiring. Without taking into account the industry of weavers who make our cloth, silversmiths who emboss silver plate, fabricators of porcelain and glass, painters, gilders, who embellish our houses, upholsterers, etc., that is to say, society, in approaching your ideal, would annihilate three-fourths of the most flourishing industries, and, in other words, would return to a savage state."

"Better work out your salvation in a savage state," persisted the opinionated Abbé Ledoux, "than deserve eternal agony by abandoning yourself to the pleasures of a corrupt civilisation."

"What sublime disinterestedness! But then, why leave so generously these renunciations to others, these

bitter, cruel privations, abandoning to them your part of paradise, and modestly contenting yourself with easy living here below, sleeping on eider-down, refreshing yourself with cool drinks, and comforting your stomach with warm food? Come, let us talk seriously, and confess that this is a veritable outrage, a veritable blasphemy against the munificence of creation, not to enjoy the thousand good things which she provides for the satisfaction of the creature."

"Pagans, materialists, philosophers!" exclaimed Abbé Ledoux, "who are not able to admit what, in their infernal pride, they are not able to comprehend!"

"Yes, *credo quia absurdum.* This axiom is as old as the world, my dear abbé, but it does not prevent the world's progress to the overthrow of your theories of privation and renunciation. Thank God, the world continually seeks welfare! Believe me, it is not necessary to reduce mankind to feeding on roots and drinking water; on the contrary, we ought to work to the end that the largest possible number may live, at least, upon good meats, good poultry, good fruit, good bread, and pure wine. Nature, in her infinite wisdom, has made man insatiable in demands for his body, and in the aspirations of his intelligence, and, if we think only of the wonderful things which man has made to gratify his five senses, for which nature has provided so bountifully, we are struck with admiration. We are then but obeying natural laws to labour with enthusiasm for the comfort and well-being of others, by the consumption and use of these provisions, and, as I told the canon, to do, each in his own sphere, as much as possible; in short, to enjoy without remorse, because — But the clock strikes six; come with me, my lord canon, and write the letter which is to bring your charming niece here. I will take a last look at my laboratory, where two of my best pupils have undertaken duties which I have entrusted to them. The dear abbé will await me in the parlour, for I intend to

complete my programme and prove to him, by economic facts, not only the excellence of gluttony, but also of the other passions he calls the deadly sins."

"Very well, we will see how far you will push your sacrilegious paradoxes," said Abbé Ledoux, imperturbably. "Besides, all monstrosities are interesting to observe, but, doctor — doctor — three centuries ago, what a magnificient auto da fé they would have made of you!"

"A bad roast, my dear abbé! It would not be worth much more than the result of that hunt that you made in the glorious time of your fanaticism against the Protestants in the mountains of Cévennes. Bad game, abbé. Well, I shall be back soon, my dear guests," said the doctor, taking his departure.

The canon having written to the mother superior of the convent, a man in the confidence of Doctor Gasterini departed in a carriage to fetch Senora Dolores Salcedo, and at the same time to inform Captain Horace and his faithful Sans-Plume that they could come out of their hiding-place.

A half-hour after the departure of this emissary, the canon, the abbé, as well as the nieces and nephews of Doctor Gasterini, and several other guests, met in the doctor's parlour.

CHAPTER XV.

DOLORES and Horace soon arrived, within a short interval of each other, at the house of Doctor Gasterini. We leave the reader to imagine the joy of the two lovers and the expression of their tender gratitude to the doctor and the canon. The profound pity of the canon, the consciousness of assuring the happiness of his niece, were manifested by a hunger as rapacious as that of a tiger, as he whispered, with a doleful voice, in the doctor's ear:

"Alas, alas! will your other guests never come, doctor? Some people have such frightful egotism!"

"My guests will not delay much longer, my dear canon; it is half-past six, and at seven o'clock every one knows that I go to the table relentlessly."

In fact the invited guests of the doctor were not long in assembling, and a valet announced successively the following names:

"The Duke and Duchess of Senneterre-Maillefort!"

"Pride," whispered the doctor to the canon and abbé, who made a wry face as he recalled the misadventure of his protégé, who pretended to the hand of the rich heiress, Mlle. de Beaumesnil.

"How amiable you are, duchess, to have accepted my invitation!" said the doctor to Herminie, whom he advanced to welcome, kissing her hand respectfully. "If I must tell you, madame, I counted on you to decide on this dear pride, that M. de Maillefort, M. de Senneterre, and I admire so much in you."

"And how is that, my dear doctor?" said Gerald de

Senneterre, affectionately. "I well know that I owe the happiness of my life to my wife's pride, but—"

"Our dear doctor is right," replied Herminie, smiling. "I am very proud of the friendship he has for us, and I avail myself of every opportunity to show him how much I appreciate his attachment, without even speaking of the eternal gratitude we owe him for his devoted care of my son and the daughter of Ernestine. I need not tell you, dear doctor, how much she regrets not being here this evening, but her indisposition keeps her at home, and dear Olivier and her uncle, M. de Maillefort, do not leave the interesting invalid one minute."

"There is nothing like these old sailors, these old soldiers of Africa, and these duellist marquises to make good nurses, without wishing to depreciate the terrible Madame Barbançon," replied the doctor, gaily. "Only, duchess, permit me to differ from you in the construction you have placed on my words. I wished to say that your own tendency to pride assured me beforehand that you will encourage in me that delightful sin, in making me proud to have you in my house."

"And I, doctor," said Gerald de Senneterre, smiling, "I declare that you encourage in us alarmingly the dainty sin of gluttony, because when one has dined at your house, he becomes a gourmand for ever!"

The conversation of the doctor, Herminie, and Gerald, to which the canon was giving close attention, was interrupted by the voice of the valet, who announced:

"M. Yvon Cloarek!"

"Anger," whispered the doctor to the canon, advancing to meet the old corsair, who, notwithstanding his great age, was still hale and vigorous.

"Long live the railroads! for I come this instant from Havre, my old comrade, to assist at the anniversary of your birthday," said Yvon, cordially grasping the doctor's hands, "and to come here I have left Sabine, Sabinon, and Sabinette,—names that the old centenarian,

Segoffin, my head artilleryman, has given to my granddaughter and great-granddaughter, for I am a great-grandfather, you know."

"Zounds! old comrade, and I hope you will not stop at that!"

"And so my son-in-law, Onésime, whom you ushered into life thirty years ago, charged me to remember him to you. And here I am!"

"Could you fail to be at our annual reunions, Yvon, my brave comrade, I should have one of those magnificent attacks of anger which used to possess you."

Then turning to the canon and the abbé, the doctor presented Yvon, saying:

"This is Captain Cloarek, one of our oldest and most illustrious corsairs, the famous hero of the brig *Hell-hound*, which played wonderful tricks at the end of the Empire."

"Ah, captain," said the canon, "in 1812 I was at Gibraltar, and I had the honour of often hearing you and your ship cursed by the English."

"And do you know, my dear canon, to what admirable sin Captain Cloarek owes his glory, and the services he rendered to France in the victorious cruises he made against the English?" I am going to tell you, and my old friend will not contradict me. Glory, success, riches, — he owes all to anger."

"To anger?" exclaimed the abbé.

"To anger!" said the canon.

"The truth is, gentlemen," modestly answered Cloarek, "that the little I have done for my country I owe to my naturally tremendous anger."

"M. and Madame Michel," announced the valet.

"Indolence," said the doctor to the canon and the abbé, approaching Florence and her husband, — Michel having married Madame de Lucenay after the death of M. de Lucenay, victim of a balloon ascension he had attempted from Mount Chimborazo, in company with Valentine.

"Ah, madame," said Doctor Gasterini, gallantly kissing the hand of Florence, "how well I know your good-will when you tear yourself away from your self-indulgent, sweet habits of idleness, to give me the pleasure of having you at my house before your departure for your beautiful retreat in Provence."

"Why, my good doctor," replied the young woman, smiling, "do you forget that indolent people are capable of everything?"

"Even of making the incredible effort of coming to dine with one of their best friends," added Michel, grasping the doctor's hand.

"And to think," replied Doctor Gasterini, "just to think that several years ago I was consulted for the purpose of curing you of this dreadful sin of indolence. Happily the limitations of science, and especially the profound respect I feel for the gifts of the Creator, prevented my attempt upon the ineffable supineness with which you are endowed."

And designating Abbé Ledoux by a glance of his eye, the doctor added:

"And, madame, Abbé Ledoux, whom I have the honour of presenting to you, considers me, at this hour even, a pagan, a dreadful idolater. Be good enough to rehabilitate me in his opinion, by informing this saintly man that you and your husband have, in the midst of profound and invincible idleness, exercised an activity without bounds, an inconceivable energy, and a sagacity which have secured for both of you an honourable independence."

"For the honour of indolence, respected abbé," replied Florence, smiling, "I am obliged to do violence to my own modesty, as well as that of my husband, by confessing that the dear doctor has spoken the truth."

"M. Richard!" announced the valet.

"Avarice," whispered the doctor to the canon and

the abbé, while the father of Louis Richard, the happy husband of Mariette, advanced to meet him.

"Is this M. Richard?" said the abbé, in a low voice to Doctor Gasterini, "the founder of those schools and houses of retreat established at Chaillot, and so admirably organised?"

"It is he, himself," replied the doctor, extending his hand to the old man, as he said, "Welcome, good Richard, the abbé was just speaking to me of you."

"Of me, dear doctor?"

"Or, if you prefer it, of your wonderful endowments at Chaillot."

"Ah, doctor," said the old man, "you must render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, — my son is the founder of those charitable institutions."

"Let us see, my good Richard," replied the doctor, "if you had not been as thorough a miser as your friend, Ramon, your worthy son would not have been able to make your name blessed everywhere as he has done."

"As to that, doctor, it is the pure truth, and, too, I confess to you that there is not a day I do not thank God, from this fact, for having made me the most avaricious of men."

"And how is your son's friend, the Marquis of Saint-Hérem?"

"He came to visit us yesterday with his wife. His household is the very pearl of establishments. He invited us to visit his castle just erected in the valley of Chevreuse. They say that no palace in Paris equals it in splendour. It seems that for three years fifteen hundred artisans have been at work on it, without counting the terraces of the park, which alone have employed the force of four villages, and, as the marquis pays handsomely, you can conceive what comfort has been spread abroad through the neighbourhoods around his castle."

"Well, then, my good Richard, you confess that, if the uncle of the marquis had not had the same avarice

which you possessed, this generous fellow would not have been able to give work to so many families."

"That is true, my dear doctor, so, under the name of Saint-Ramon, as the marquis has jestingly christened his uncle, the memory of this famous miser is blessed by everybody."

"It is inconceivable, abbé," said the canon, "the doctor must be right. I am confounded with what I hear and with what I see. We are actually going to dine with the seven deadly sins."

"M. Henri David!" said the valet.

At this name the countenance of the doctor became grave; he walked up to David, took both his hands with effusive tenderness, and said:

"Pardon me for having insisted upon your acceptance of this invitation, my dear David, but I promised my excellent friend and pupil, Doctor Dufour, who recommended you to me, to try to divert you during your short sojourn in Paris."

"And I feel the need of these diversions, I assure you, sir. Down there our life is so calm, so regular, that hours slip away unperceived; but here, lost in the turmoil of this great city to which I have become a stranger, I feel these paroxysms of painful sadness, and I thank you a thousand times for having provided for me such an agreeable distraction."

Henri David was talking thus to the doctor when seven o'clock sounded.

The canon uttered a profound sigh of satisfaction as he saw the steward open the folding doors of the dining-room.

CONCLUSION.

At the moment the guests of the doctor were about to enter the dining-room, the valet annnounced:

"Madame the Marquise de Miranda."

"Luxury," whispered the doctor to the abbé. "I feared she might fail us."

Then offering his arm to Madeleine, more beautiful, more bewitching than ever, the doctor said, as he conducted her to the dining-room:

"I had just begun to despair of the good fortune you had promised me, madame. Listen to me, at my age the happiness of seeing you here again you must know is inexpressible. Ah, if I were only fifty years younger!"

"I would take you for my cavalier, my dear doctor," said the marquise, laughing extravagantly; "I think we have been friends, at the least estimate, for fifty years."

We will not undertake to enumerate the wonders of the doctor's elegant dining-room. We will limit ourselves to the menu of this dinner, — a menu which each guest, thanks to a delicate forethought, found under his napkin, between two dozen oysters, one from Ostend and the other from Marennes. This menu was written on white vellum, and encased in a little framework of carved silver leaves enamelled with green. Each guest thus knew how to reserve his appetite for such dishes as he preferred. Let us add only that the size of the table and the dining-room was such that, instead of the narrow and inconvenient chairs which force you to eat, so to speak, with the elbows close to the body, each guest, seated in a large and comfortable chair, the feet on a

Two Large Confections. — Candy ship in rose-coloured cream, temple of sugar candy with pistachios.

Chestnuts with frozen apricots, pineapple jelly with fruits, Bavarian cheese frozen with raspberries, whipped cream with cherry jelly, French cream with black coffee, preserved strawberries.

After reading this menu, the canon, carried away with enthusiasm, and forgetting, we must confess, all conventionalities, rose from his chair, took his knife in one hand and his fork in the other, and, stretching out his arm, said, in a solemn voice:

"Doctor, I swear I will eat it all!"

And in fact the canon did eat all.

And still he had an appetite.

It is useless to say that the exquisite wines, whose delicious ambrosia the canon had already tested, circulated in profusion.

At dessert, Doctor Gasterini rose, holding in his hand a little glass of iced wine of Constance, and said:

"Ladies, I am going to offer an infernal toast, — a toast as diabolical as if we were joyously banqueting among the damned in the lowest depth of the dining-room in the kingdom of Satan."

"Oh, oh, dear, amiable doctor!" exclaimed all with one voice, "pray what is this infernal toast?"

"To the seven deadly sins!" replied the doctor. "And now, ladies, permit me to express to you the thought which this toast inspires in me. I promised Abbé Ledoux, who has the honour of being seated by the Marquise de Miranda, — I promised the abbé, I repeat, this man of mind, of experience, and learning, but incredulous, — to prove to him by positive, incontrovertible facts, the good that can be achieved in certain instances, and in a certain measure by these tendencies, instincts, and passions which we name the seven deadly

soft carpet, had all the latitude necessary for the evolutions of his knife and fork. Here is the menu which the canon took with a hand trembling with emotion and read religiously.

MENU FOR DINNER.

Four Soups. — Soup à la Condé, rich crab soup with white meat of fowl, soup with kouskoussou, consommé with toast.

Four Relevés of Fish. — Head of sturgeon à la Godard, pieces of eel à l'Italienne, salmon à la Chambord, turbot à la Hollandaise.

Four By-plates. — Croquettes à la royale, morsels of baked lobster tail, soft roe of carps à la Orly, little pies à la reine.

Four Large Dishes. — Quarter of pickled wild boar, ragout of beef from salt meadows, quarter of veal à la Monglas, roast beef from salt meadows.

Sixteen Entrées. — Scalloped roebuck à l'Espagnole, fillet of lamb à la Toulouse, slices of duck with orange, sweetbreads with jelly, sweetmeats of beccaficos à la d'Uxelle, meat pie à la Nesle, macaroni à la Parisienne, hot ortolan pie, fillets of pullet from Mans, woodcocks with choicest seasoning, quails on toast, rabbit cutlets à la maréchale, veal liver with rice, partridge with black pudding à la Richelieu, foie gras à la Provençal, fillet of plover à la Lyonnaise.

Intermediate. — Punch à la Romaine.

Birds. — Pheasants sauced and stuffed with truffles, fowl dressed with slices of bacon, turkey stuffed with truffles from Périgord, grouse.

Ten Side-dishes. — Cardoons with marrow, artichokes à la Napolitaine, broiled mushrooms, Périgord truffles with champagne wine, white truffles of Piedmont with olive oil, celery à la Française, lobster stewed with Madeira wine, shrimps stewed with kari from the Indies, lettuce with essence of ham, asparagus and peas.

sins. The whole problem is to regulate them wisely, and to draw from them the best that is possible. Now, as the Duchess of Senneterre-Maillefort, Madame Florence Michel, and the Marquise de Miranda have for a long time honoured me with their friendship, — as MM. Richard, Yvon Cloarek, and Henri David are my good old friends, I hope that, for the triumph of sound ideas, my amiable guests will have the grace to aid me in rehabilitating these capital sins, that by their excess, owing to the absence of proper control, have been absolutely condemned, and in converting this poor abbé to their possible utility. He sins only through ignorance and obstinacy, it is true, but he does not the less blaspheme these admirable means and sources of energy, happiness, and wealth, which the inexhaustible munificence of the Creator has bestowed upon his creatures. Now, as nothing is more charming than a conversation at dessert, among men of mind, I beg that, in the interest of our unfortunate brother, Abbé Ledoux, the representatives of these various sins will tell us all that they owe to them, both in their own careers and in the success of others."

The proposition of Doctor Gasterini, unanimously welcomed, was carried out with perfect grace and uninterrupted joyousness. Henri David, who was the last but one to speak, interested the guests keenly in recounting the prodigies of devotion and generosity that Envy had inspired in Frederick Bastien, and even tears flowed at the account of the death of that noble child and that of his angelic mother. Happily the recital of Luxury concluded the dinner, and the lively marquise made the whole company laugh, when speaking of her adventure with the archduke, whose passion she did not share. She said that it was easier to induce the Pope's legate to masquerade as a Hungarian hussar than to make an Austrian archduke comprehend that man was born for liberty. Moreover, the marquise announced that she

contrived a plan of campaign against the old Radetzki, and finally engaged in transforming him into a coal merchant, and making him one of the chief instruments in the liberation of Italy.

"But this snow, dear and beautiful marquise," said the doctor to her, in a low voice, after this recital, "this armour of ice, which renders you apparently disdainful to those whom you inflame, is it never melted by so many fires?"

"No, no, my good doctor," replied the marquise, softly, with a melancholy smile; "the memory of my blond archangel, my ideal and only love, keeps the depths of my heart pure and fresh, like a flower under the snow."

"And I had remorse!" cried the canon, in a transport of delight over his easy digestion. "I was miscreant enough to feel remorse for the indulgence of my appetite."

"Instead of remorse, an excellent dinner gives, on the contrary, even to the most selfish hearts, a singular inclination to charity," replied the doctor, "and if I did not fear I should be anathematised by our critical and dear Abbé Ledoux, I would add that, from the point of view of charity, — from that standpoint, gluttony would have the happiest results."

"Go on," replied the abbé, shrugging his shoulders, as he sipped a little glass of exquisite cream, flavoured with cinnamon of Madame Amphoux, 1788. "You have already uttered so many absurdities, dear doctor, that one more or less — "

"It depends not on chimeras, utopian schemes, but upon facts, palpable, practical, to-day and to-morrow," interrupted the doctor, "facts which can pour every day considerable sums in the coffers of the benevolent enterprises of Paris! Is that an absurdity?"

"Speak, dear doctor," said the guests, unanimously; "speak! We are all listening to you."

"This is what happened," replied the doctor; "and I regret that the thought did not occur to me sooner.

Three days ago I was walking on one of the boulevards, about six o'clock in the evening. Surprised by a heavy shower, I took refuge in a café, one of the most fashionable restaurants in Paris. I never dine anywhere else than at home, but to keep myself in countenance, and satisfy my desire for observation, I ordered a few dishes which I did not touch, and, while I was waiting for the rain to stop, I amused myself by observing the persons who were dining. There could be a book, and a curious book, too, written upon the different shades of manner, character, and social and other conditions of people who reveal themselves unconsciously at the solemn hour of dinner. But that is not the question. I made this observation only, that each man, as he seated himself at the table, with an air indifferent, anxious, cheerful, or morose, as the case might be, seemed, in proportion as he dined upon excellent dishes, to yield to a sort of beatitude and inward happiness, which was reflected upon his countenance, that faithful mirror of the soul. As I was seated near one of the windows, I followed with my eye each one as he left the café. Outside the door stood a pale, ragged child, shivering under the cold autumn rain. Ah, well, my friends, — I say it to the praise of gourmands, — almost every one of those who had dined the best gave alms to the poor little hungry, trembling creature. Now, without speaking ill of my neighbour, I ask, would these same persons, fasting, have been as charitable? And I venture to affirm that the little beggar would have met with a harsh denial if he had asked them when they entered the café, instead of waiting until they came out."

"Is this pagan going to tell us that charity owes its birth to gluttony?" cried Abbé Ledoux.

"To reply successfully, dear abbé, it would be necessary for me to enter into a physiological discussion upon the subject of the influence of the physical on the moral,"

said the doctor. "I will tell you one simple thing. You have boxes for the poor at the doors of your churches. No one more than myself respects the charity of those faithful souls who put their rich or modest offering in these sacred places; but why not place alms-boxes in fashionable cafés, where the rich and the happy go to satisfy their refined tastes? Why not, I say, place your poor-boxes in some conspicuous spot, with the simple inscription, "For the hungry?"

"The doctor is right!" shouted the guests. "It is an excellent idea; every great establishment would show large receipts every day."

"And the little establishments also," replied the doctor. "Ah, believe me, my friends, he who has made a modest repast, as well as the opulent diner, feels that compassion which is born of a satisfied want or pleasure, when he thinks of those who are deprived of the satisfaction of this want or this pleasure. Now, then, let me resume: If all the proprietors of these restaurants and cafés would follow my counsel, having an understanding with the members of benevolent enterprises, and would place in some conspicuous spot their poor-boxes, with the words, or others equivalent, "For the hungry," I am convinced, whether from charity, pride, or respect for humanity, you would see alms rain down in them to overflowing. For the most selfish man, who has spent a louis or more for his dinner, feels, in spite of himself, a painful sense of benefits, a sort of bitter after-taste, at the sight of those who suffer. A generous alms absolves him in his own eyes, and from a hygienic point of view, dear canon, this little act of charity would give him a most happy digestion."

"Doctor, I confess myself vanquished!" cried Abbé Ledoux. "I drink, if not to the seven deadly sins in general, at least, in particular to gluttony."

THE END.

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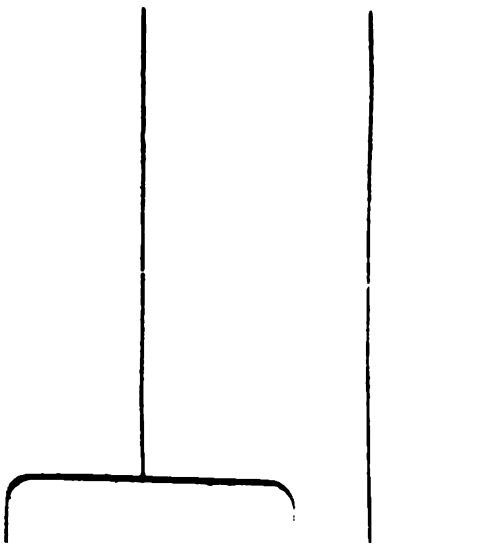
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